

UNITED THANK OFFERING

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



A Letter from the President

Reflection by UTO President, Sherri Dietrich

Gratitude is life changing. **When you make gratitude the first lens through which you see the world you begin to see more and more of the good things around you.** When you notice more good things you feel happier and more hopeful about the world. When you feel happier and more hopeful you are kinder and more grateful to the people you encounter each day. When you are kinder and more grateful to the people around you they also begin to feel happier and more hopeful about themselves and the world, and then they become more grateful for the good things around them and are kinder and more grateful to the people around them, and so on. **Gratitude is a virtuous circle.**

For nearly 130 years the United Thank Offering has been encouraging Episcopalians to embrace the personal spiritual discipline of gratitude, to notice the good things around them, to give thanks to God, and to put offerings into their Blue Boxes or the Blue Box app. **Over those 130 years UTO has collected \$140,177,924.73 and given it all out in grants that have changed and continue to change lives around the world every day.** Your Blue Box offering of gratitude for a happy day with a child or grandchild becomes part of a prenatal clinic. Your gratitude for a beautiful sunset helps fund an innovative prison ministry program. **And the virtuous circle expands.**

So many of us want to change things about the world but feel overwhelmed and helpless to do so in the face of so much need. **But with UTO, gratitude can and does change the world, one Blue Box offering at a time. Gratitude changes lives—beginning with yours.**

Gratefully,
Sherri Dietrich
UTO Board President



UTO Goals

Summarized by UTO President, Sherri Dietrich

2019

1. Increase availability of Spanish language resources and problem solve getting resources inexpensively to dioceses outside of the U.S.

We translated into Spanish several more of our items and have increased the online offerings. We also developed a timeline for the production of new UTO materials to coincide with pick-up at General Convention to avoid the issue with shipping tariffs.

2. Create opportunities for people to learn about and experience UTO grant sites in person through pilgrimage programs.

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.

3. Create regional training events alongside partners to expose new audiences to UTO and support UTO members and leaders in their participation in UTO.

UTO joined with Missional Voices to present a regional training event in New Orleans, attended 60 enthusiastic UTO coordinators and other people interested in UTO's work. We plan to offer a regional training event in different areas of the U.S. every year, building on what we learned from this first event.

2020

1. Increase participation by 5%—more UTO member/participants and increased ingathering

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

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

Sabbatical Reflection

Reflection by Staff Officer, Heather Melton

One of the things I am most thankful for during 2019 was the opportunity to take a sabbatical. After almost two decades of working for The Episcopal Church, this was the first long break from daily work I've had, and it took a few weeks for me to adjust to not being in front of my computer every day, especially after the very busy few weeks we had just prior to my time off. The other great part of my sabbatical is that it was timed to coincide with my entire family being on summer vacation so we were able to really spend some quality time together, which is something I think we are all very grateful for.

The backbone of my time off was spent working through the first part of the certification process through the Brené Brown Education and Research Group (BBEARG) in leading group work through *The Daring Way*™ and *Rising Strong*™. This work entailed lots of online coursework, tests, reading, and reflection. Once I passed the online work, I was ready to attend the in-person training in San Antonio, Texas. I have to admit, I was feeling very intimidated walking into that hotel and seeing all of the amazing folks who had gathered to work and study together. The group filled a ballroom and included everyone from licensed therapists to school counselors, to clergy and CEOs. I met folks who are doing incredibly hard work and making communities stronger and better. **There were people gathered from all over the world, all committed to finding ways to show up and be brave in their work, in their homes, and in their communities.** We began by hearing from Brené Brown, who talked about the BBEARG belonging statement (which you can read in full here: <https://brenebrown.com/bbearg-belonging-statement/>) which we all were asked to agree to uphold. **accountability, courage, vulnerability, empathy, shame resilience, and the power of story can change the world. That's what we are committed to teaching, training, and practicing."** We then broke into small groups to go through the materials, learn how to facilitate trainings, and dig deep into shame and vulnerability. After the intensive time in San Antonio, we all returned home and worked further in our small groups through online classes, discussions, reading, and responses. Finally, a few weeks before I was to return to work, I completed all of the training and became a candidate in the program.

Some of you have asked what shame and vulnerability have to do with gratitude. The more I work on gratitude and on vulnerability the more I realize how they are connected. I often find that those who are most resistant to the idea of practicing gratitude can eventually articulate that the issue they have is really about vulnerability. You see, gratitude is an incredibly vulnerable practice. **Gratitude forces us to recognize that we need help, we need other people, and we need connection. Gratitude reminds us that everything is a gift from God and everything is transitory, which makes us, as the recipient of all of these gifts, very vulnerable.** I feel like if we really want to understand how powerful gratitude is, we have to get comfortable with vulnerability.



Many of you have asked what happens now. **My goal is to offer trainings in *The Daring Way*™ where people need them but perhaps can't afford them or to groups of UTO folks.** (Just know we'll be offering some aspects of the training as workshops during Triennial/General Convention.) We'll also be weaving this work into our next pilgrimage in 2022. If you would like to learn more or invite me to come to one of your events, please do let me know. I would love the opportunity to keep practicing being brave alongside all of you.

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- UTO Staff Officer, Heather Melton

2019 Grants

In 2019, the United Thank Offering Annual Grant process focused on supporting the Presiding Bishop's directive of **Go: Crossing Boundaries Created by Race, Culture, and Economics to Create Communities that Listen Deeply and Learn to Live Like Jesus**. through 33 grant awards to parishes and dioceses and 6 to Young Adults and Seminarians.

The Episcopal Church

28 grants, for a total of \$1,135,903.38 supported projects in The Episcopal Church.

\$1,135,903.38

From supporting new immigrants as they incorporate into life in the United States in Massachusetts to supporting the opening of the Star Lodge in North Dakota.

The Anglican Communion

\$371,737.17

5 grants, for a total of \$371,737.17 supported projects in the Anglican Communion.

From creating computer labs to connect students in Palestine to building a facility in Kenya to support homeless children.

Young Adults & Seminarians

6 Grants for a total of \$28,100 were awarded to Young Adults and Seminarians through our YAS Grant Program.

\$28,100

The focus of these awards were on Living Out our Baptismal Covenant. These projects ranged from an intentional community in Arizona to starting Messy Church in Idaho.



Pilgrims on the Camino

Reflection by Associate Staff Officer, Michelle Walker

In October 2019, pilgrims from around the country arrived in Madrid, Spain, to begin the UTO Pilgrims on the Camino pilgrimage. **The United Thank Offering, in partnership with The Episcopal Diocese of Northern Indiana and the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church, developed a 10-day pilgrimage starting in Madrid and ending in Santiago de Compostela.** This pilgrimage was paired with a UTO Camino Challenge grant that offered to match on contributions toward an Anglican Centre in Santiago. **It was a wonderful opportunity for 35 pilgrims to experience the reality of being church in Spain and witness the amazing ministries supported by UTO.**

This pilgrimage was inspired by Bishop Reginald Mallet of the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Indiana, who travelled to Spain in 1955, at great risk



to his own safety, to co-consecrate the second Bishop of Spain. This was under the Franco regime when the church was highly persecuted and at risk of disappearing. In gratitude for this ministry of the Diocese of Northern Indiana, this pilgrimage was organized by UTO and the Spanish Church; Bishop Douglas Sparks, current Bishop of Northern Indiana, was invited to co-lead.

With Bishop Carlos' expertise in Spanish Church history and Bishop Doug's faithful pastoral leadership, the adventures began. Pilgrims began in Madrid with Eucharist at the Cathedral of the Redeemer followed by a Pilgrims Blessing. The next day the pilgrims traveled together to experience the 11th-century walled city of Avila. After this stop, 12 pilgrims continued traveling with Bishop Carlos to visit UTO grant sites through Northwest Spain while the remaining 21 pilgrims continued with Bishop Doug to walk 100+ kilometers of the Camino. The two groups reunited in Santiago de Compostela and walked the last blocks to the cathedral together. Pilgrims toured Santiago together, enjoyed a beautiful Eucharist, and explored the city in anticipation of celebrating our last meal together before traveling home.

The Camino, over the centuries, has been a pilgrimage for millions of people who walk from varying points for weeks or months to arrive at the Cathedral in Santiago where they celebrate their achievement with Holy Communion. The UTO Pilgrims on the Camino and accompanying UTO Camino Challenge Grant were designed to help the Church in Spain establish an Anglican Centre in Santiago where all Christians, regardless of their denomination, are welcome to receive communion. **Through our journeys and the sharing of our stories, \$57,325.02 was raised for this venture. UTO will match this amount for a total grant payout of \$108,922 towards the Anglican Centre. What a joyful reason to celebrate!**

Every pilgrim will tell you they were blessed by the journey; they made new and wonderful friends and were inspired by the ministries of both the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church and UTO. It was a wonderful adventure for our first UTO pilgrimage. I, Associate Staff Officer Michelle Walker, was incredibly blessed to be part of this adventure from its inspiration through to the awarding of the grant.



The United Thank Offering hopes to consider another pilgrimage, to a different destination in the near future. Until then *buen camino!*



The Camino was an extraordinary experience because it taught me once again to be grateful for small things, for things that might ordinarily seem mundane. Ironically, walking made me appreciate the stillness that gratitude to God requires.

- UTO Board Member, Caitlyn Darnell



Memorial Trust Fund

Report

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. 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. Earnings are also used to provide free resources to support the increase in participation in UTO.

In 2019, we received 10 donations equaling \$2,233, a portion of which was also collected through a fundraiser on Custom Ink, all of which was added to the principal of the trust. **In 2019, the Memorial Trust Fund interest provided for \$426,794.70 to support the work of the United Thank Offering.**

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.

DONORS

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

**Birdie Blake-Reid
JoAnne Chapman
Sherri Dietrich
Channing Homer
Joyce Landers**

**Heather Melton
Maggie Noland
Rock and Jay Ratterree
Michelle Walker
Peggy Wilds**

Journey to Palestine: Looking Back

2018-2019 Julia Chester Emery Intern, Katelyn Kenny

Jerusalem during my time as the Julia Chester Emery Intern began to resurface in my Google Photos app and Facebook Memories. My heart warmed as I sifted through photos of sacred holy sites and delicious meals, but I'll admit, it was a bit odd to relive those moments, a year later, in what felt like a completely different world.

In 2019, I attempted to recount stories from our trip through a series of blog posts published in the monthly e-newsletter. I hope those stories brought awareness about the plight of Palestinian Christians and the UTO grant sites striving every day to meet the needs of the people under the care of the Diocese. **In the midst of such pain, I saw reasons for hope in so many places, and my prayer is that you saw that, too.**

As a refresher, the Diocese of Jerusalem serves Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria and is part of the Anglican Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. The Diocese is comprised of 28 congregations, over 30 charitable institutions, two major hospitals, several clinics and rehabilitation centers, and more than a dozen schools.



Since our trip, the Diocese has received an Anglican Communion grant from UTO to improve and enhance educational technology in the diocesan schools. I take heart knowing the blessings offered by Blue Box holders go towards worthy causes each year, but it's a slightly different, more personal feeling when I've visited the places receiving those blessings.

The Diocese of Jerusalem also hosted the most recent Anglican Primates' Meeting this past January in Amman, Jordan. During this time, 33 heads of Anglican provinces, including Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, made pilgrimages to holy sites throughout the region, including Mount Nebo, where Moses saw the Promised Land, and the River Jordan, where Jesus was baptized. They also visited Jerusalem and Bethlehem and met with other leaders in the region. The communiqué drafted following the meeting acknowledged the pressures faced by Christians in the Middle East, pressures we came to know during our time in the Holy Land, as well.



Another recent update is the election of Hosam Nouam, Dean of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem, as bishop coadjutor for the Diocese. Upon provincial ratification, he will assist Archbishop Suheil Dawani and later be installed as Archbishop following Archbishop Suheil's retirement in 2021.

I find great comfort in knowing The Episcopal Church is housed within the global Anglican family, even when that relationship brings its inevitable tensions and disagreements. The Anglican Communion is a reminder that God's work is bigger than all of us, and yet, requires each one of us, connected through God's grace given to the world through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. I'm especially grateful that the United Thank Offering has historically honored that familial connection through its granting. **Every penny given to UTO gets put to good use somewhere in the world, both near and very far. With that in mind, every offering becomes a tangible way that we can say to our siblings globally, "I love you, I support you, we walk this journey together.**

“Every penny given to UTO gets put to good use somewhere in the world, both near and very far. With that in mind, every offering becomes a tangible way that we can say to our siblings globally:

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- 2018-2019 Julia Chester Emery Intern, Katelyn Kenny



Ingathering Report

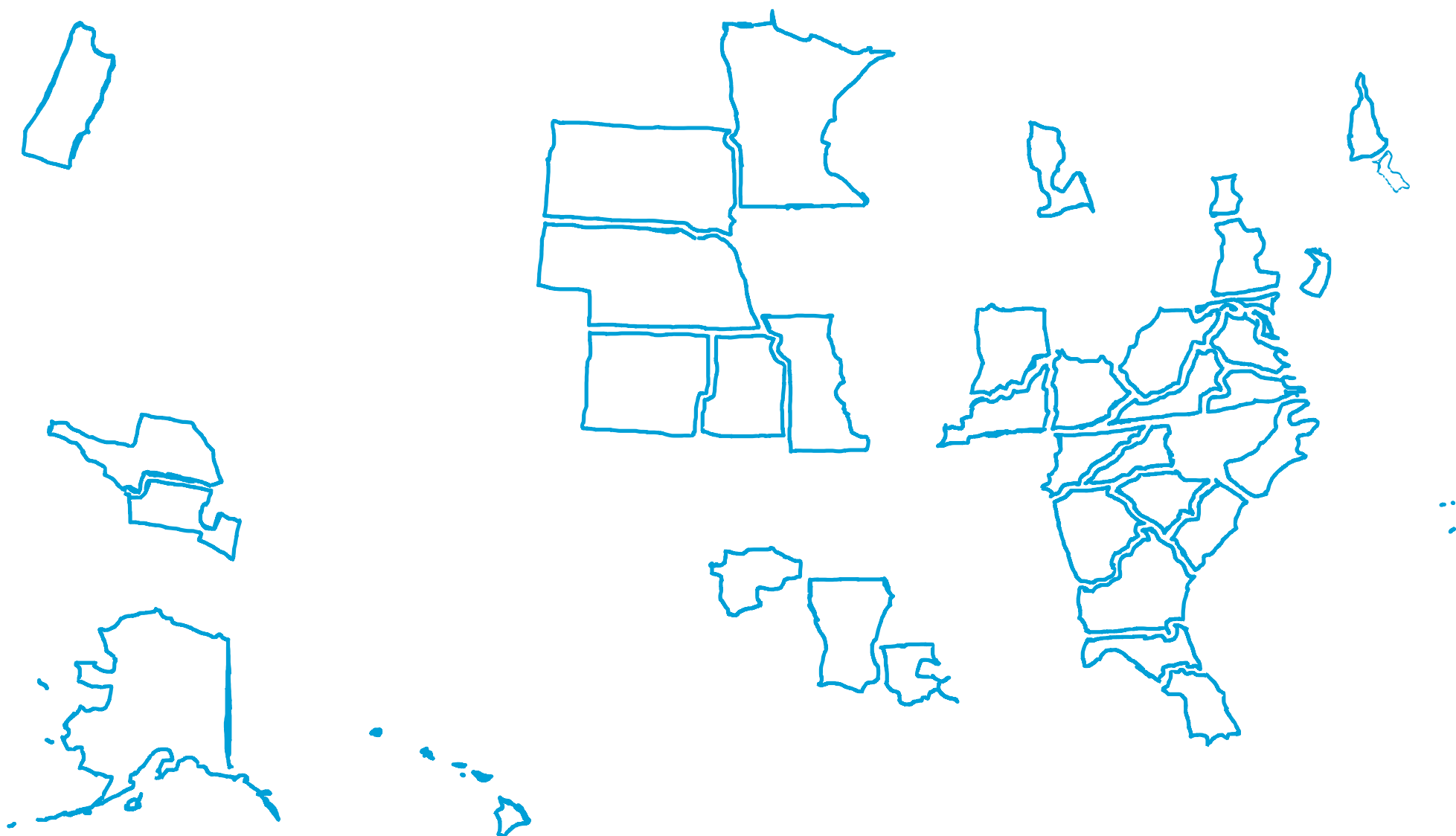
At a dime a piece, we collected over **ten million** thanksgivings in 2019.

Total Ingathering:
\$1,057,076.43

Total from Trust Funds, Returned
Grant Money, and Interest:
\$426,794.70

Total Granted:
\$1,548,013.66

Thank you to the **40 dioceses** listed below for growing gratitude and participation in 2019 by increasing giving to UTO!



Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rochester, Virgin Islands, Central Pennsylvania, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Southern Virginia, Southwestern Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Atlanta, Central Florida, East Carolina, East Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Lexington, Louisiana, South Carolina, Upper South Carolina, Western North Carolina, Indianapolis, Eastern Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Dallas, Kansas, West Missouri, Western Kansas, Western Louisiana, Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, Los Angeles, Oregon, San Diego

Julia Chester Emery Internship

Reflection by 2019-2020 Intern, Isabelle Watkins

In many ways, my year as the Julia Chester Emery intern has played out exactly how I expected it to. Just as I expected, I have traveled the world with UTO - from Spain to New Mexico and many other exciting places in between. Just as I expected, I have spent most of my days at Jasmine Road, a Thistle Farms affiliate in Greenville, SC that provides 2 years of holistic healing for survivors of human trafficking and have formed beautiful relationships. Just as I expected (with this being my first year out of college and on my own) I have experienced tremendous growth and self-discovery.

For the ways that my expectations were met, I am truly grateful.

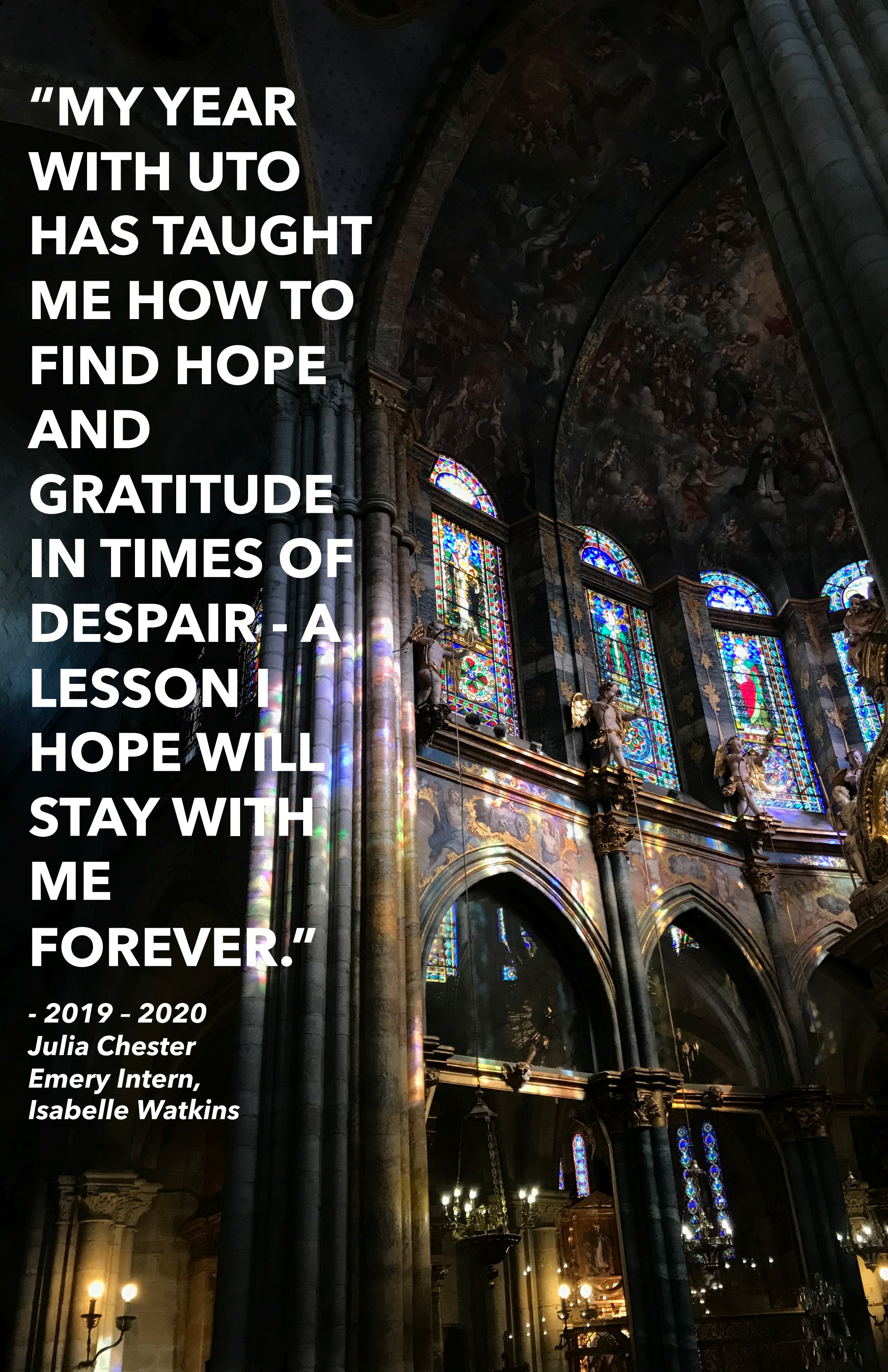
In an equal amount of ways, my year as the Julia Chester Emery intern has been drastically different than I expected. In October, I expected to travel to Quito, Ecuador for a UTO Board Meeting - that trip was cancelled due to political unrest in South America. In January, I expected to drive to Atlanta for Rooted in Jesus - on the way my car broke down due to engine failure, and I was left without a car for 2 months. This Spring, I expected to partake in many exciting UTO ventures - UNCSW in New York City, the UTO Scholars conference in Chicago, General Convention planning in Baltimore with Sherri and Joyce - all of which have been postponed or refigured due to the uncertain COVID-19 pandemic. **Yet through all the unexpected, the most pertinent has been my personal development in gratitude.**

While I knew gratitude was UTO's mission, I had no idea the impact it would make on my life. I did not expect to be surrounded by staff and board members who were deeply committed to the practice of gratitude, nor did I expect to be enthralled by literature and resources on gratitude in the ways that I have grown to be. I certainly did not expect to keep a daily gratitude journal. **As cliché as it sounds, gratitude is beginning to transform my life.**

While I never want to undermine the heart attack and distress caused from political unrest or a global pandemic, **my year with UTO has taught me how to find hope and gratitude in times of despair - a lesson I hope will stay with me forever.** A cancelled trip to Quito opened the door for a trip to New Mexico to visit Heather and the Melton family - a trip for which I was entirely grateful. My lack of car encouraged me to slow down, use my able body to walk places instead of drive, and connect with friends and co-workers who generously offered me rides. Those two months were filled with gratitude for what I had (legs and good friends) as opposed to fear and despair for what I did not have (a car). Most recently, a gut-wrenching pandemic has offered me time and space to awaken my creativity, connect with loved ones, and truly appreciate those working on the front lines.



For all the expected and unexpected events this year has brought, I can say that I am truly grateful. For the lessons I've learned, the people I've met, the trips I've been on, and the trips I haven't. Thank you to everyone who has walked with me along the way.

The background of the image is the interior of a Gothic cathedral. It features tall, slender columns, a high vaulted ceiling with intricate frescoes, and several large, colorful stained glass windows. The lighting is dramatic, with light streaming through the windows and illuminating the architectural details. The overall atmosphere is one of grandeur and historical significance.

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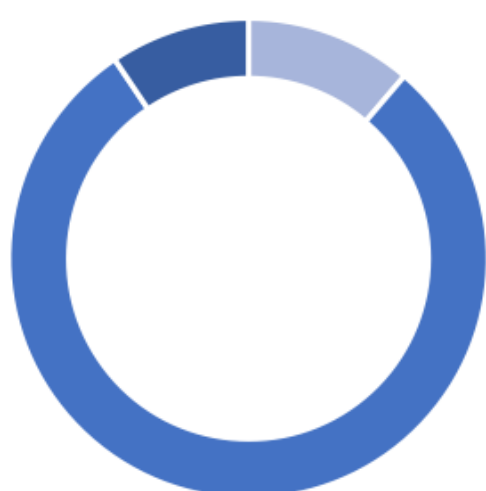
**- 2019 - 2020
Julia Chester
Emery Intern,
Isabelle Watkins**

Financial Report

This year we continued to look at ways to better leverage our budget coming out of General Convention. We began with a three-year plan for offering a variety of training options. In 2019, we gathered in New Orleans as a partner event to Missional Voices, to offer training to UTO Coordinators as well as people simply interested in UTO. We also piloted a Children's formation program on gratitude which will serve as the foundation for the General Convention Children's Festival in Maryland before being offered freely to the church. Each year the Board has a fund set aside to try new initiatives as we seek better ways to teach the importance of gratitude. In 2019, these funds were used to begin the process of creating the UTO Scholars Conference, which will take place in 2020. We are also developing new educational resources, printed Blue Boxes and Brochures and started to develop plans for General Convention. Staff and Board members participated in Rooted in Jesus as well as other events where they were able to teach about gratitude and learn from others about potential areas for future grant focus areas. We continue to work hard to stretch every dollar we can. We are grateful to the IT department, as they have taken over the Blue Box app and the database, so we no longer need to pay for either of those key pieces of technology.

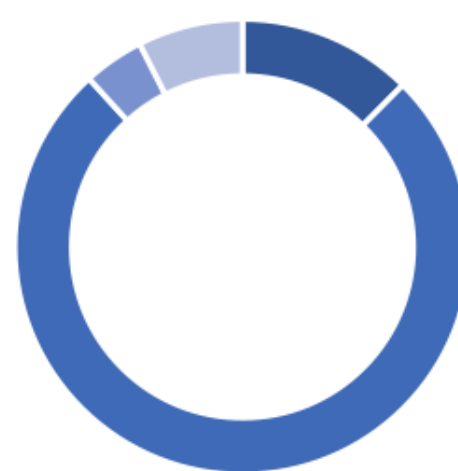
Income vs. Expenses

2019 Income



- Wright Trust - \$38,278
- Memorial Trust - \$26,9582.63
- Bell Trust - \$32,066.84

2019 Expenses



- Board Expenses - \$37,562.93
- Staff Expenses - \$37,562.93
- Office Expenses - \$13,025.49
- Education Materials and Distribution - \$22,559.54

Gratitude: A Year in Review

2019 Reflections by United Thank Offering Board Members and Staff

Sherri Dietrich
UTO Board President

I'm grateful for the amazing pilgrimage in Spain and adjunct trip to Peru, which gave me so much to think about. Globally, I'm thankful for the young activists speaking out on climate change and caring respectfully for the Earth.

Rosamond Daniels
Province III

I am extremely grateful for the birth of my second granddaughter. I am grateful that oil has been discovered in the country of my birth, Guyana, and pray that this comes with blessings to the residents of Guyana.

Vernese Smith
Province II

I am grateful that I was able to spend Christmas at sea, something I always wanted to do. I am also grateful for the many soldiers that risk their lives for us, and for the many prayers and negotiations that helped to avoid another war with our nation.

Sedona Jacobson
Young Adult Board Member

I am personally grateful for friends and family. They are there when we need them the most. Worldwide, I am grateful for the land. The land not only feeds us, but also connects us.

Diane Gabbard
Province IV

On a personal level I am thankful for our beautiful new daughter-in-law, and on a more global level I am thankful for the election of our new bishop in the Diocese of Lexington.

Joyce Landers
UTO Board Vice-President

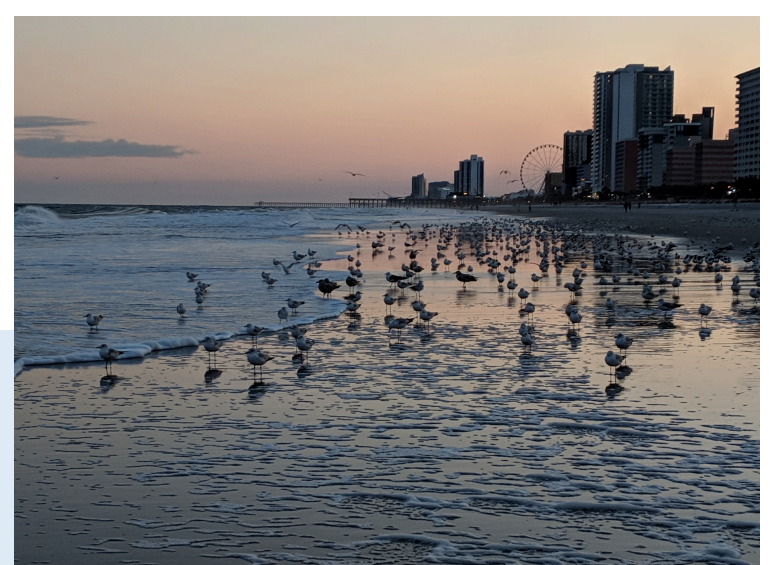
I am grateful for my beautiful church home. I am grateful that I was able to take my dream trip to the highlands of Scotland.

Katie Mietus
Province VIII

I thank God for the many UTO training opportunities. In my personal life, I am especially grateful to God that after three leg surgeries, my niece can walk again!

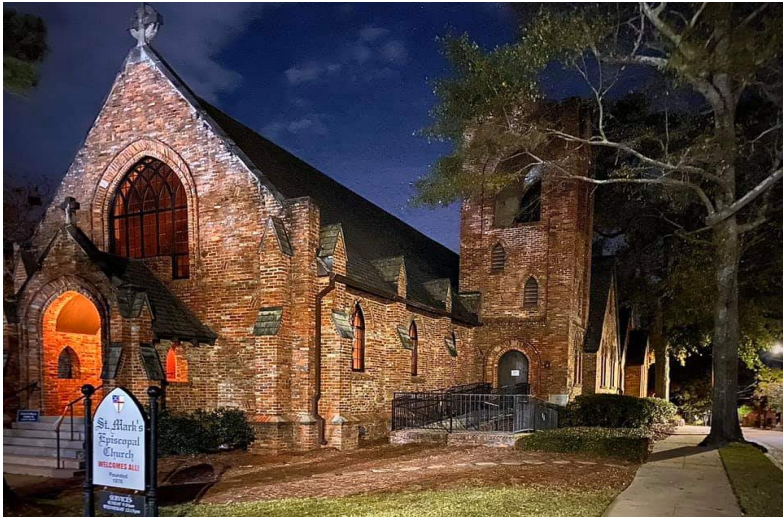
Gail Donovan
Province V

I'm thankful for a day to walk on the beach and the beauty of God's Creation.



Gratitude: A Year in Review

2019 Reflections by United Thank Offering Board Members and Staff



Caitlyn Darnell
Young Adult Member

I'm grateful for the opportunity to walk the Camino de Santiago during a big transition in my life, and for my fellow pilgrims who walked with me. I'm also grateful for all of the people and resources who helped put out the Amazon and Australian wildfires..

Jane Jellison
Province I

I am grateful for the Sunrise Movement and young people working to restore the health and beauty of our earth. I am grateful to be the daughter of Fred and Ruth, who exemplified a life of Christian love.

Lorraine Candelario
Province IX

I am so grateful to our Lord that my brother Melvin's stem cell transplant was a success. He is now cancer free. I am grateful that El Yunque Rainforest in Luquillo, Puerto Rico has been restored after being devastated by Hurricane Maria..

Maggie Noland
Province VII

I am thankful for my granddaughter's healthy pregnancy. I am extremely thankful for those individuals and organizations who are working to combat human trafficking.

Heather Melton
UTO Staff Officer

I'm thankful we got to go to Disney World for Christmas. I'm thankful that White Sands in New Mexico was made a National Park.

Michelle Walker
UTO Associate Staff

I am thankful for the opportunity to have participated in the UTO Pilgrims on the Camino pilgrimage. I am thankful for the many ministries UTO helps support around the world.

Isabelle Watkins
Julia Chester Emery Intern

I am grateful for the tremendous personal growth I have experienced. I'm grateful for the people and places that feel like home, and for the sunshine and ever abundant Earth.

