



Office of Public Affairs

A statement from the United Thank Offering Board

[February 18, 2014] The members of the board of the United Thank Offering have issued the following statement.

Please join the United Thank Offering Board in giving thanks to God for the collaborative work between the Board, staff of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society and members of Executive Council, the result of which is the creation of organizational documents that clarify and implement the work of the Board, grow the ministry of the United Thank Offering, and facilitate the relationship between the Board and Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS).

It has come to our attention that some confusion remains over how the Bylaws and Memorandum of Understanding were created, approved and even over their content. The Board wants to share some basic information regarding the process and content with the hope of helping those of you with concerns about the status of the United Thank Offering. Please know that we are always open to questions; we welcome the opportunity to clear up any confusion that may impede participation in the United Thank Offering.

In October, members of our Board, along with the UTO Coordinator, met with members of Governance and Administration for Mission (GAM) of the Executive Council. We discussed the state of the Board in Executive Session and then decided that a small group of Board members and Executive Council members would meet to look at the governing documents of the Board, along with Paul Nix, who serves as legal counsel for the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. We left the meeting in October feeling optimistic and hopeful that this process of working together would be mutually informative and help us chart a way forward. In January 2014, the working group met in Texas to draft Bylaws and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). We spent a great deal of time discussing and deciding what was needed in these documents and those of us who represented the Board feel that the quality of these documents will give us a firm foundation for success moving forward. These documents were then approved unanimously by the Board at the end of January and then by Executive Council at the beginning of February. The Bylaws and MOU are available here: <http://www.generalconvention.org/ccab/files/513> As the life and work of this Board changes, these documents and our new policies and procedures will continue to change

also. We believe that these documents are an excellent and transparent description of the work we do, and highlight how the Board is growing structurally.

In spite of the Board's approval and comfort with the new governing documents, we continue to hear concerns from within The Episcopal Church. We will try to address some of the common concerns here.

1. Some people have shared the concern that the Board will no longer be responsible for the granting process, administration and ministry of the United Thank Offering. The Board continues to be responsible for the work and ministry of the United Thank Offering, including but not limited to granting. As we have for many decades, we will work closely with the trained staff available to us through The Episcopal Church who continue to support our work and help us continually grow our ministry. The ultimate responsibility of grants resides with the Board. The Board bears responsibility for the annual granting process and the administration of the United Thank Offering. Like all of the granting agencies of The Episcopal Church, we do this in cooperation with Executive Council.
2. We have heard that there is a concern that the DFMS staff will take over granting ingathering funds or the operations of the United Thank Offering. Bishop Stacy Sauls, Chief Operating Officer, Sam McDonald, Director of Mission and the Rev. Heather Melton, UTO Coordinator are firm supporters of the work of the United Thank Offering and each has a Blue Box on his or her desk. They have championed our ministry, supported our work, and listened to our concerns. Bishop Sauls is committed to making sure we are able to do that work and that we have access to the staff and resources we need in order to accomplish our goals, but he, or other staff members, do not approve or recommend grants, mission, or ministry undertaken by our Board.
3. The trust funds are legally held by The Episcopal Church (DFMS), as are all trust funds of the Church. The Board creates a budget for the management of these funds for the triennium and updates it yearly. We are aided in the financial work by the Finance Department of The Episcopal Church. They carry out our requests, and they help us follow sound financial practices.

2013 was a year of tremendous change for the United Thank Offering Board. Not only did the president of the Board die suddenly, but also we were without a staff UTO Coordinator and were coming out of a time of study: INC 055 AD Hoc Committee. We began the process of searching for a new staff UTO Coordinator and we are pleased and excited to have the Rev. Heather Melton, who was hired in June, on the journey with us.

At the beginning of September, four members of the Board chose to resign. Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori did not fill these vacancies, as some have suggested. Instead, they were filled by the appropriate Provinces of The Episcopal Church in accordance with the 2011 Bylaws, which were then in force. The majority of the Board remained and they continue to bring new ideas and hope to this important ministry. As

difficult as all of the changes which took place over the last 13 months have been, we believe that we are poised to move into the next 125 years of the United Thank Offering with a much better understanding of our history and the role of this Board in strong, supportive partnership with the staff and leadership of The Episcopal Church.

Please know that we are very interested in supporting the work and ministry of the United Thank Offering in your diocese. We are currently developing new resources for parishes, children and youth as well as specific initiatives for our 125th anniversary. Our website: www.episcopalchurch.org/uto is a wonderful resource for basic information. We hope that you will continue, or begin to participate in the annual ingathering of funds that are then given out each year as grants to support local ministry. We hope you'll apply for grants so that we can hear the good work that you are doing and partner with you in it.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns that we have not addressed in this letter. The Rev. Heather Melton, hmelton@episcopalchurch.org, is available if you need further information about the United Thank Offering, have questions regarding the process that unfolded or how your congregation might participate in this ministry. She can also put you into contact with your province representative on the Board if you have specific questions.

Barbara Schafer, UTO Board President/Province VIII UTO Representative

UTO Board Executive Committee Members:

Marcie Cherau, Vice President/Province IV Representative

Dena Lee, Secretary/Province III Representative

Susan Howland, Financial Secretary/Province I Representative

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