

THE DIOCESE OF ARIZONA RECEIVES 2021 UTO GRANT COMMUNITY DRIVEN STREAMING AND DIGITAL MINISTRY IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

BY MARY HOVDEN,
ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE (TEMPE)
UTO GRANT PROJECT LEAD

On October 12, 2020, our United Thank Offering (UTO) Grant Application team found out that we had been awarded funds for our UTO grant proposal submitted in August! To say that we were honored, overwhelmed and thrilled is an understatement; many of us cried with happy and grateful tears, some of us couldn't believe that our grant request had been funded because the UTO Board receives about two times as many grant requests as they have money to fund. Others were relieved that we now had a funding source for a digital option to help us support our congregations during the continuing pandemic. It had been a long, hard process to get the UTO loan application completed – especially this summer while COVID-19 was ravaging Arizona – so here's a little bit of our story.

In late June, when the newly formed St. James Digital Ministry Team first decided to apply for UTO grant funds with a grant focus of Recovering with Love and Gratitude: An Episcopal Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Local Contexts, we looked at it as a request for streaming equipment just for St. James (Tempe) to use once we could get back into our sanctuary. We felt that many of our parishioners would not be comfortable attending in-person services. We considered the diocesan connections of one of our Digital Ministry Team members, Rev. Dr. Robin Hollis, and thought, why not bring in more congregations into the grant request? Wouldn't the Lord want us to "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also

to the interests of others"? Philippians 2:4. So, after encouragement and support from Bishop Reddall, we increased our scope from one participating congregation to the final 13 participating congregations (see list below).

Congregations represented in the UTO Grant:

ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE, TEMPE
(PROJECT LEAD)
CHURCH OF THE APOSTLES, ORO VALLEY
(ALPHA TEST SITE)
ST. ALBAN'S, WICKENBURG
ST. PETER'S, CASA GRANDE (BETA TEST SITE)
ST. JOHN'S, BISBEE
ST. STEPHEN'S, DOUGLAS
ALL SAINTS, SAFFORD
SS PHILIP & JAMES, MORENCI
ST. PAUL'S, TOMBSTONE
ST. RAPHAEL IN THE VALLEY, BENSON
TRINITY CHURCH, KINGMAN
ST. LUKE'S AT THE MOUNTAIN, PHOENIX
(BETA TEST SITE)
ST. STEPHEN'S, SIERRA VISTA

Going forward, our project goals are to: 1) sustain parishes through COVID-19 and beyond, 2) continue to provide weekly services and more to a community that is unable to attend in-person gatherings, and 3) provide services online, even after churches reopen for in-person gatherings, for those who are not able to, or may not feel comfortable to attend, due to health considerations. Success will be measured by number of views, clicks and attendance at online services, events and programs. The ultimate measure of success will be the continued existence of our parishes during and beyond COVID-19.

What has been so wonderful about the whole process so far is the incredible collaboration between the 13

congregations – from the application process to the implementation process. The Lord is definitely at work as we move ahead with this effort. At the time this article was written, we're in the process of meeting with the entire team, requesting/receiving UTO grant funds, ordering streaming equipment, piloting and testing equipment and preparing all 13 congregations for their streaming installation. Once we have installations in place, we'll share best practices and installation photos.

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 the 100% of what is collected to support innovative mission and ministry throughout The Episcopal Church and Provinces of the Anglican Communion. For more info, please go to the UTO website at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/united-thank-offering>.

