

This mission moment is about the **United Thank Offering**.

What does that mean? People in all the Episcopal Churches have the opportunity to thank God for our blessings, and to put a coin in a little blue box as we thank God. Pretty simple.

Episcopalians have been doing this since 1889. Twice a year, folks bring their boxes or bags of coins to church. They are counted and sent on to our Diocese of Southwest Virginia. Our diocese then sends the total for all our churches to the national church. A grand total of \$138,629,911.07 has been given and then dispersed to fill grant requests.

Our diocese has been granted \$104,439 in just the past 4 years. Each grant period has had a particular emphasis. 2018's emphasis was to support our Presiding Bishop's focus on Becoming Beloved Community. Grace Church, Lexington, wrote a grant to turn their undercroft area into a community space that could become the home base for Building Beloved Community in the Lexington area. They were awarded a grant of \$46,905 to help with this project. In 2014, \$12,500 was awarded to help Grace House, a mission of our diocese, redo the kitchen. They have lots of groups coming to help in mission work rebuilding roofs, porches, helping the people of Appalachia who can't do the work or pay for the work due to extreme poverty.

That same year, a grant was awarded to Lexington to equip a mobile dental unit for visits from underserved children. That grant was for \$41,239.

In 2015, Martinsville was awarded \$3,795 to help St Paul's develop a new music program with digital access. I'm not really sure what that means, but obviously they explained it well enough to receive some financial help.

Several years ago, Emmanuel asked for some help to establish a maintenance fund for Valley Supportive Housing, but we didn't fit the criteria that year and we as the church do not own those properties.

The year 2018 grants have been announced, as well as the total gathered for this building of beloved community. \$1,535,740.55.

3 historic grants totaling \$123,352.11 for Episcopal Migration Ministries

4 grants \$234,481.70 to support projects in the Anglican Communion-to help purchase a house in Spain to house refugees: water tanks to provide water in Kenya are just two of these grants

5 companion grants \$236,145.15 to provide support between a diocese within the Episcopal Church and one in the Anglican Communion, or a diocese that receives support from the General Convention Budget. Buying a van for North Dakota for a camp to building a community center in Costa Rica

22 grants \$787,151.34 to support projects within the Episcopal Church-like the Grace Church grant

10 grants \$24,911 were awarded to Young Adults and Seminarians.

You can see lots of good coming from our little blue boxes. My challenge to you is to take a box, place it in a prominent space that you will actually see, and each evening thank God for 3 blessings, then put a coin in your box. When we stop and think about all the ways our God has truly blessed our lives, it puts a different spin on the day and wipes away the disappointments and petty thoughts. We are happier, and we will be helping others with our gift.

The next ingathering is May 19<sup>th</sup>, so this is a very short term challenge!