



# Gratitude Materials for Children: UTO and Illustrated Ministries Lesson Plans

## Gratitude Lesson Plan Drafts

*Created by the Rev. Rowan Larson for use or adaptation locally.*

Objective: Introduce gratitude in church setting, introduce how God is present in gratitude, introduce UTO and the connection between offerings of money and gratitude (longer version only)

**25-30 minutes** (ideal for groups who do formation during the Liturgy of the Word or only have a short time to work in)

- **Gathering** (5 mins)
  - o Gather in a circle and go around the circle saying names (if needed) and a thing you're grateful for. Then go around again and name a person you're grateful for. Finally, go around a third time and say something God has done in your life that you're grateful for.
- **Illustrated Ministry Coloring Sheet Activity** (15-20 mins)
  - o Read through all the coloring sheets as a group, before starting to color. Leader (or ask children, if they're confident readers) to read the text on each sheet out loud.
  - o Ask:
    - I wonder what kinds of "thank yous" you heard? (key point: thank yous are for God!)
    - I wonder what kinds of thank yous are missing? (or: what you would add)
    - I wonder which gratitude, or thank you, speaks most to you today?
  - o Have participants choose to work on the coloring sheet that speaks most to them (have all printed as a packet to bring home).
  - o Extra time?
    - Come back together as a group for discussion. Some questions to consider:
      - Why did you choose the coloring sheet you did?
      - Was there anything surprising about what kind of thank yous you saw in the coloring sheets?
      - Who do you usually say thank you to? (parents, siblings, other family members, teachers, coaches, etc)
      - What do you usually thank them for?
      - When you're not in church, do you ever say thank you to God?
      - What do you thank God for?
      - I wonder if we can also thank God for the same things we thank people for? Are there things we can only thank God for?

- **Closing** (2-3 minutes)
  - o Pray:
    - Litany of Thanksgiving (BCP pg 836 or adapted version for younger learners in leader material packet)
  - o Dismiss children back to their parents or to worship, depending on your context

**45-50 minutes** (ideal for groups who are older and/or have more time)

- **Gathering** (10 mins)
  - o Gratitude Pick Up Stick activity; make sure participants are able to join in as they arrive
    - Play more than once or with multiple sets if you have a lot of kids. You can add your own questions, too!
- **Illustrated Ministries Coloring Sheet Activity** (15-20 mins)
  - o Read through all the coloring sheets as a group, before starting to color. Leader (or ask children, if they're confident readers) to read the text on each sheet out loud.
  - o Ask:
    - I wonder what kinds of "thank yous" you heard? (key point: thank yous are for God!)
    - I wonder what kinds of thank yous are missing? (or: what you would add)
    - I wonder which gratitude, or thank you, speaks most to you today?
  - o Have participants choose to work on the coloring sheet that speaks most to them (have all printed as a packet to bring home).
  - o Extra time?
    - Come back together as a group for discussion. Some questions to consider:
      - Why did you choose the coloring sheet you did?
      - Was there anything surprising about what kind of thank yous you saw in the coloring sheets?
      - Who do you usually say thank you to? (parents, siblings, other family members, teachers, coaches, etc)
      - What do you usually thank them for?
      - When you're not in church, do you ever say thank you to God?
      - What do you thank God for?
      - I wonder if we can also thank God for the same things we thank people for? Are there things we can only thank God for?
- **United Thank Offering - Blue Box** (optional, 10 minutes. Participants can continue to color if desired)
  - o If you look at the bottom of the coloring sheets, it says they were commissioned by the "United Thank Offering." Does anyone know who or what that is?
    - UTO is a ministry of the Episcopal Church that has been around for over 150 years! UTO was founded by Julia Chester Emery as a way for ordinary Christians across the church to support extraordinary work across the world.

- From its beginning, UTO has invited people to notice the good things that happen each day, to give thanks to God for those blessings through prayer, and to make an offering of money for each blessing in a “blue box.”
    - UTO redistributes 100% of the money collected each year to bless other people across the Episcopal Church and across the world in the provinces of the Anglican Communion.
  - I wonder why the United Thank Offering connects money to gratitude?
    - Think about your own life: do you care more about things that you get for free or things you had to work hard for? For grown-ups, and for kids, money is a tangible way to quantify our work.
    - When you give to others, you can give of time, talent, or treasure. What does that mean for you? Is it hard to share your treasure? Why?
  - Does God need money? (No, but people who are God’s hands and feet on earth need money to do the work God calls us to do: to love our neighbors, to care for the poor and oppressed, to feed the hungry, etc.)
  - How much are the good things in your own life worth to you? (this would be a good question for older groups, like upper elementary schoolers or middle/high schoolers or adults)
  - Distribute color-your-own Blue Boxes or regular Blue Boxes for participants to take home and encourage them to try making thank offerings to God in gratitude each day or once a week, with instructions to bring the Blue Box back for an ingathering on a specific date for your context.
- **Closing** (5 minutes)
  - Ask:
    - I wonder if you learned something new about gratitude and giving thanks to God today?
  - Pray:
    - Litany of Thanksgiving (BCP pg 836 or adapted version for younger learners in leader material packet)
  - Go:
    - Dismiss children back to their parents or to worship, depending on your context or end class in your usual way

## **Litany of Thanksgiving (BCP 836)**

Let us give thanks to God our Creator for all of the gifts so freely bestowed upon us.

For the beauty and wonder of your creation, in earth and sky and sea.

*We thank you, Lord.*

For all that is gracious in the lives of your people, revealing the image of Christ,

*We thank you, Lord.*

For our daily food and drink, our homes, our families, and our friends,

*We thank you, Lord.*

For minds to think, and hearts to love, and hands to serve,

*We thank you, Lord.*

For health and strength to work, and leisure to rest and play,

*We thank you, Lord.*

For the brave and courageous, who are patient in suffering and faithful in adversity,

*We thank you, Lord.*

For all valiant seekers after truth, liberty, and justice,

*We thank you, Lord.*

For the communion of saints, in all times and places,

*We thank you, Lord.*

Above all, we give you thanks for the great mercies and promises given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord;

Praise and glory to Jesus our Redeemer, God our Creator, and the Holy Spirit, our Sustainer, now and for ever.

*Amen.*

## **Simplified Litany of Thanksgiving (based on BCP 836)**

Let us give thanks to God for all the gifts we are given.

For the gift of our beautiful world—the green earth, blue skies,  
and the deep ocean, we say...

*Thank you, God!*

For the ways we see Jesus in the people around us, we say...

*Thank you, God!*

For our daily food, our homes, our families, and our friends, we say...

*Thank you, God!*

For minds to think, hearts to love, and hands to serve, we say...

*Thank you, God!*

For the brave people who are trying to make the world a better place, we say...

*Thank you, God!*

For all the saints who show us how to live, we say...

*Thank you, God!*

Most of all, we say thank you for the saving love of Jesus.

We praise you God, our Creator, Jesus, our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit,  
our Sustainer!

*Amen.*