



## Gratitude Paper Chains: An Intergenerational Gratitude and Generosity Activity

### **Note:**

*This gratitude practice comes from a parish UTO Coordinator who wanted to visually show her congregation how much they had to give thanks for in their daily lives. We've used it with all ages and for various lengths of time. This project was especially popular at Episcopal Youth Event, where young people came day after day to see how long the chain was getting and what others were thankful for that might inspire their gratitude. We recommend having this project last over the course of a month and end with a way to recognize and collectively give thanks for all of the blessings noted on the paper chains. Please see the UTO Liturgy Booklet for a UTO Ingathering service that you can use for this activity as well.*

### **Overview:**

Gratitude Paper Chains are a super easy project to help people visualize how many good things God is doing in the midst of their daily life. It's easy to start at coffee hour, during the announcements or as a part of a parish gathering. It can be done by anyone of any age or ability. You'll be making paper chains like many of us made as children to decorate our Christmas tree. We recommend having the children in your congregation lead this activity for everyone. It can be their contribution to a stewardship campaign in the congregation and way to talk to kids (and the congregation) about all of the gifts of time, talent, and treasure represented in the paper chains as gratitude for the gifts and actions of others.

### **Supplies:**

**Paper cut into slips** - these can be as long or short as you want, but long enough that someone can write (or draw) what they are thankful for. We recommend making them in a variety of colors but all the same length.

**Tape or staplers** to attach the chains

**Markers, crayons, pens, etc.** for people to decorate or write on their slips

### **Action:**

Invite your congregation to take slips and write one thing on each slip for which they are grateful about your congregation. You can invite them to take home slips and bring them back the following Sunday, so they can continue to notice and give thanks. We strongly recommend having a stack of slips in each pew that people can fill out while waiting for church to start and put into the offering plate. Once you have a pile of slips begin to assemble them into a chain. If the children are leading this activity, you can ask them to assemble the chains.

Let people know how long this project will last and how long you are hoping to make the chain. For example, we're going to do this for a month and we want to see how many lengths of the sanctuary we can complete. Then simply remind people, continue to provide paper, and keep adding gratitude links to your chain. When the time has finished, be sure to offer a concluding prayer of gratitude for all of the blessings the chain represents before taking them down.

### **Ways to Help Children Lead this Activity**

In addition to having children be helpers to pass out papers and make the chains, the kids can really help share the stories of gratitude that the congregation collects. We recommend sharing some of the things on the slips as a part of a children's sermon time or at the announcements. This is an opportunity to share with the kids about the things written on the paper. Help them connect that these things are gifts people are

sharing with your congregation. For example, if someone says they are thankful for the flowers on the altar, share with the kids that someone donates money to buy them and someone arranges them. Explain that sometimes the way that we are generous is by sharing our gifts with others. Some gifts are really artistic, like arranging flowers, and some are harder to notice like making sure the flowers have water, or the folks who take them along with communion to those who can't join us at church. Whatever the thing is that someone has given thanks for, help the kids to think about all of the people and contributions to it that made it possible for us to enjoy today. Then invite them to consider the things they are grateful for at church (or that your church does in the community) and how they can contribute to them. The goal is to help kids see that gifts come in all shapes and sizes (we often call this time, talent, treasure with adults) but that kids can also share their gifts in their congregation, from passing out the paper slips, to sharing a drawing with someone, they have gifts to share too and we call that being generous.