

**For Release Time**

**June 11, 2020**

**United Thank Offering Announces 2020 Grant Awards**

*Diocese of Delaware to receive 2020 UTO Grant*

**Wilmington, Delaware— June 11, 2020** — United Thank Offering announced the grant recipients for the 2020 granting year, and we are excited to share that the Diocese of Delaware will receive funding for " The Pain and Prayer Scale Project: A prayer tool for drug-free pain control."

The focus of the granting process this year was **‘Bless:** Share faith, practice generosity and compassion, and proclaim the Good News of God in Christ with hope and humility.

**" The Pain and Prayer Scale Project: A prayer tool for drug-free pain control "**

Prayer joins faith and medicine to offer an alternative pain management tool. As a priest and medical doctor, the Rev. Dr. Marta Illueca plans to develop and validate a “Pain and Prayer Scale” in consultation with experts from major academic centers. This bedside-prayer-tool will connect church and academia in an unprecedented way to offer drug-free alternatives to pain management. The idea was inspired as a follow-up to the Rev. Dr. Marta Illueca’s published research collating scientific data on the potential benefits of *prayer to God* for pain management. The latter was the topic of her Capstone Thesis from the Pain Research, Education and Policy Master’s program at Tufts University School of Medicine published last year, with the subsequent identification of an unmet patient need for drug-free spiritual avenues to manage chronic pain. The validation of this new prayer scale will result in a bedside tool aimed at reducing the burden of pain. In addition, this project aligns with UTO’s focus in “sharing faith,” by bringing hope to pain sufferers who will likely respond with deep gratitude and hope for pain relief.

The UTO Board is very excited about the 2020 grant recipients. Each project provides opportunities for the church to share how their experience of faith has impacted them and invite their community to experience the love and hope of The Episcopal Church. These projects demonstrate how when our congregations work together with our communities; we are stronger together." Shared Joyce Landers, Grant Committee Convener for the UTO Board.

The UTO grant will provide seed funding for a new position for the Rev. Dr. Marta Illueca as a Clergy-Medical Research Liaison, to lead this ground-breaking collaboration between The Episcopal Church and academic researchers in the arena of pain and prayer. To date experts from Harvard, Yale, Tufts and Duke University have pledged their collaborative support in various capacities, offering their consultative expertise as an *ad honorem* Advisory Board. The "Pain and Prayer Scale" is a new and innovative expansion of the "Spiritual Wellness" Ministry, spearheaded by Rev. Illueca during her curacy at Brandywine Collaborative Ministries (BCM) in Wilmington, Delaware.

In her new position, Dr. Illueca will oversee the theological basis for developing a prayer-based clinical instrument with statistical validation for medical use, and for designing a bedside- prayer-tool applicable to pain conditions. The liaison offers strategic oversight for the integrity of the design/conduct of the project and assists with organizing/budgeting local administrative support, participant recruitment, data tracking, and training pastoral and health care providers in the applications of the prayer tool in pain management. This prayer tool will serve anyone with pain-related physical conditions including acute or chronic pain, post-surgical pain, and child-birth or C-section pain. In the Diocese of Delaware, their 34 parishes serve approximately 9,500 who will be directly invited to learn and participate in the project. Diocesan/national church clergy, chaplain associations, seminarians, medical schools, healthcare providers and medical societies will have access to the project data and bedside prayer tools. The project liaison and collaborators will offer courses and workshops to the above-mentioned groups to embody the spirit of

“sharing faith...and proclaiming the good news ...with hope and humility.” Enrollment and parish participation is planned to roll out in the fall of 2020 and the new position will be housed at Grace Episcopal Church in Wilmington.

### **United Thank Offering Funding**

Every penny given to the United Thank Offering is given away the following year to support innovative mission and ministry in the Episcopal Church. The UTO Board received almost \$3.4 million dollars in requests in 2020. Through the gratitude and generosity of those who contributed through Blue Box donations, UTO awarded over \$1.5 million in grants.

After awarding \$30,600 to Young Adult and Seminarian grants, UTO utilized the remainder of the 2019 Ingathering to fund 26 projects, including three grants which the Board awarded in honor of the legacy and commitment of UTO to supporting missionaries (and utilizing the Emery Trust Fund), educating church leaders and raising up female leadership in the church.

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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 information on UTO:**

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