

## The Apostle May 2006

### United Thank Offering – Every Day

Written by Linda Kennedy, Cathedral of the Advent

The theme, “United Thank Offering—Every Day” truly means that to many Episcopalians throughout this Diocese and the World. “UTO” has been touching lives every day since it was founded in 1889 by Julia Emery and Ida Soule. These two pioneering women began the Woman’s Auxiliary as part of the Board of Missions and have touched all of our lives by beginning the concept of the “little blue box”.

The idea is simple. We give our offering in thanksgiving for the everyday blessings of this life and in order to provide for others. This has been the goal of the United Thank Offering (UTO) for decades. Each fall and spring we collect the offering, and the proceeds are sent to help others around Alabama, the country, and the world. UTO provided more than \$2.7 million in grants during 2005, including a grant to the Renaissance Re-Entry Program in Montgomery.

In fact, UTO has been touching the lives of Alabamians for years. Mabel Shepherd, Chairman of the Altar Guild at the Cathedral Church of the Advent, still remembers where her grandmother and mother kept their blue boxes.



“My mother kept her box in her top drawer and I was not to touch it”, Shepherd said. “She would put all her extra change in those boxes.”

Shepherd said that it was very important to both her mother and to her that the UTO represented a daily reminder that we are thankful for the gifts that God has given us.

Shepherd still keeps her blue box on top of her dresser today. Alleen Cater, the current ECW President, is also a firm believer, in the blue box and turns her box in every ingathering.

The UTO has been represented for years by the “little blue box” that so many people kept in their dressers or on their counters as a daily reminder. In the past many church women would wear blue veils when they were receiving the UTO boxes on ingathering Sundays. “At the Cathedral Church of the Advent, the spring ingathering would be collected by the girls who had just been confirmed,” said Shepherd. “They would wear blue veils to represent the UTO blue boxes.

This spring, for the first time, the Advent will ask last year’s confirmands and their mothers to help with ingathering. While, they will not be wearing blue veils or blue ribbons, they will be carrying forward a long tradition of women supporting the purpose of the UTO that has remained constant throughout the years: receiving offerings that are given in thankfulness for the everyday blessings of life, to provide blessings for others.

Photo of Mabel Shepherd, Chairman of the Altar Guild at the Cathedral Church of the Advent, Birmingham, holding the Diocesan UTO offering plate. The plate was made from pieces of jewelry donated by women from around the diocese in 1954, melted and forged by Gorham Silver Company.