

Eight Congregations Recognized with Cash Grants for Accessibility Efforts *Pathways.org Inclusion In Worship Announces Annual Open Hearts Awards*

CHICAGO (October 9, 2016) — The Inclusion In Worship Ministry of Pathways.org, a Chicago based not-for-profit, is recognizing eight houses of faith from across the United States with cash grants for their efforts to include worshipers of all abilities as active participants. The congregations submitted essays with electronic photos or videos describing their specific access and inclusion projects along with contractors and cost estimates. Grants of up to \$1000 were awarded to winning congregations to help fund their projects.

2016 Open Hearts Awards:

Faith Church, Dyer, IN – \$1000 towards renovating a single restroom to create a family restroom with an adjustable, adult size changing table

Shaare Torah Synagogue, Gaithersburg, MD – \$1000 for assistive listening devices and a sign language interpreter fund

St. Albert the Great Catholic Church, Minneapolis, MN – \$228 matching grant to install an accessible toilet and grab bars in the parish meeting house.

St. Clement Catholic Church, Chicago, IL – \$1000 towards funding an elevator to the church, rectory and parish center

St. George Catholic Church, Bourbonnais, IL – \$1000 towards the installation of a hearing loop system in the church.

St. John Vianney Catholic Church, Gallup, NM – \$1000 towards replacing existing exterior doors on the church with doors wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs

Temple Israel of Great Neck, NY – \$1000 to lengthen an existing ornate handrail at the entrance to the main sanctuary

2016 Junior Open Hearts Awards

Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, Seboyeta, NM – \$1000 towards an exterior ramp to the parish meeting hall

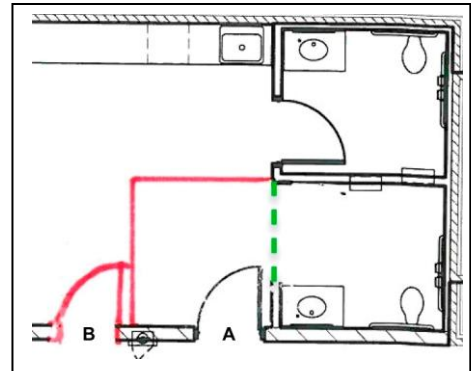
Read about the projects that will be funded by the 2016 Open Hearts Awards on the following pages.

- More -

Description of Projects Funded by 2016 Open Hearts Awards

Faith Community Church, Dyer, IN – \$1000

Faith Community Church has a modern, accessible facility. However, no family restroom is available. The church realized that in order to accommodate individuals who need hands-on support in the restroom, whether a teenager with cerebral palsy or an older individual with limited physical independence, a family restroom was needed. Vinnie Adams, Special Needs Ministry Leader at Faith Community, applied for an Open Hearts Award grant to enlarge an existing washroom so that family members could assist a loved one in the restroom. The large family restroom will have space for a height adjustable, adult size changing table and will allow caregivers of the opposite gender to assist their family member in the washroom.

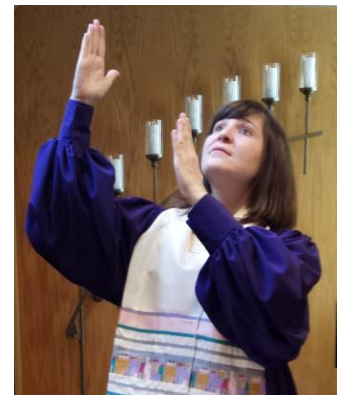


With their Open Hearts Award grant, Faith Church will create a family restroom by removing an existing wall (green dotted line), enlarging the space and creating a new entrance to their activity room.

"We are so honored to receive this Open Hearts Award grant. It is an affirmation of our desire to minister to those with special needs and to enfold them into the life of our story," said Reverend Bob Bower, pastor of Faith Community Church.

Shaare Torah Congregation, Gaithersburg, MD – \$1000

Shaare Torah congregation wants to ensure that everyone can participate in meaningful religious worship at their synagogue. Greeters are trained to make people of all abilities feel welcome. Children of all abilities are welcomed into religious education programs. Adults with developmental disabilities who live in nearby group homes have become an integral part of the congregational community. A multi-floor facility with an elevator that operates automatically on Sabbath, accessible washrooms, exterior ramps and a height adjustable Torah reading table say "all are welcome". The \$1000 Open Hearts Award grant will allow the purchase of assistive listening devices and create a fund for sign language interpreters for lifecycle events and High Holidays.



Shaare Torah Congregation will use their Open Hearts Award for a sign language interpreter fund and assistive listening devices.

“Our congregation is part of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism Ruderman Inclusion Action Community, a national cohort of congregations sharing best practices and learning together how to include worshipers of all abilities. We are happy to have the opportunity to apply for a Pathways.org Open Hearts Award and to learn of the online resources at www.InclusionInWorship.org that Pathways provides to faith based communities,” said Marci Harris–Blumenthal, Open Hearts Award applicant.

St. Albert the Great Catholic Church, Minneapolis, MN – \$228 matching grant

St. Albert the Great Catholic Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota requested a matching grant to modify an existing washroom. With their \$228 matching grant the church will make the meeting house washroom accessible with the installation of grab bars and a higher, elongated, accessible toilet.

“We are grateful to be recipients of two previous grants from Inclusion in Worship. In 2009 we were able to supply hearing devices for our worship space and in 2011 we were able to make access improvements in the washroom in the church vestibule. Pathways.org Inclusion in Worship is a shining beacon for inclusion, awareness and welcome,” stated Robin Henry, Open Hearts Award applicant.

St. Clement Catholic Church, Chicago, IL– \$1000

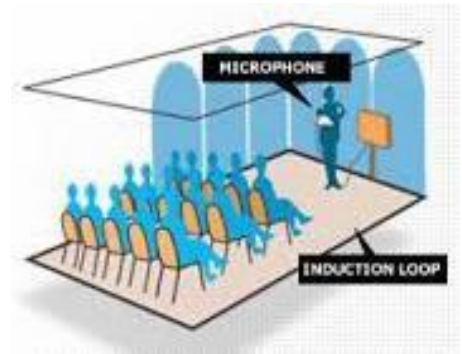
St. Clement Catholic Church found it very difficult to live out their mission of “All Are Welcome” with their limited use, limited access (LULA) elevator that provides access to the church. When a 6’5” gentleman, temporarily using a wheelchair after surgery, was denied access to the church because the existing elevator was too small to accommodate him, it was decided that something had to change. With the help of an architect, a design was created to provide access to the church, chapel, rectory and parish center from one centralized elevator. “We want to provide a welcoming, accessible entrance experience to our campus,” said Kim Carter, Director of Operations at St. Clement. The \$1000 Open Hearts Award grant will be put toward the capital campaign to fund the elevator.

“We are truly appreciative of the support of Pathways.org and the Open Hearts Award grant,” said Father Ken Simpson, pastor of St. Clement Parish.

St. George Catholic Church, Bourbonnais, IL – \$1000

St. George Catholic Church in Bourbonnais, Illinois realized that an induction hearing loop system was needed to compensate for the lofty ceilings and stone walls of an 1872 era church. Reverberating sounds make it very difficult for parishioners with hearing

aides to understand the prayers, scripture readings and homilies during church services. An induction loop system, made possible by their \$1000 Open Hearts Award grant, will project the sound system directly into parishioner's hearing aids. Headsets will be available for parishioners who do not use hearing aids but could use assistance with hearing during liturgies.

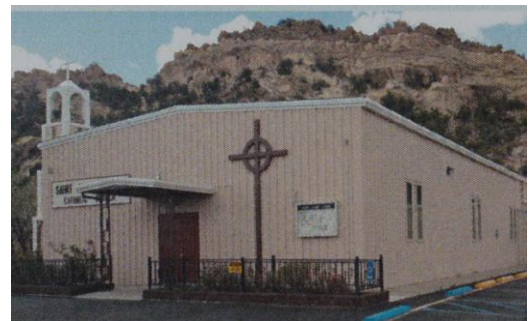


An induction loop system will be installed at St. George Catholic Church with their 2016 Open Hearts Award grant.

“Our mission here at St George is to ensure EVERYONE hears the Good News. Proclaiming the Gospel will take on new meaning with the installation of the hearing loop system. Thank you so much for this generous gift,” said Father Dan Bellinger, pastor at St. George Catholic Church.

St. John Vianney Catholic Church, Gallup NM – \$1000

A walker and a wheelchair enable Father Kevin Finnegan to fulfill his duties as pastor at St. John Vianney parish in the Mission Diocese of Gallup, New Mexico. Father Finnegan incurred a C-6 spinal cord injury in March of 1973. The former Chancellor of the Diocese of Gallup, Father Finnegan was appointed pastor of St. John Vianney parish in May of 2015.



St. John Vianney Catholic Church will replace the front doors of their mission church to provide access for wheelchairs with their Open Hearts Award grant.

One of the first things Father Finnegan did at his new parish was to create a plan for making the church accessible. A ramp to the altar and modifications to a washroom have been completed.

Now, more welcoming exterior doors to the church are planned. With the \$1000 Open Hearts Award grant, the existing double doors on the church building will be replaced with a wider 36 inch door to accommodate wheelchairs on the left and a reconfigured, narrower door on the right.

Pastoring a flock in one of the most economically impoverished areas in the nation, Father Finnegan states, “I certainly appreciate the grant from Pathways.org Inclusion In Worship. You do not realize how valuable this grant is to us. Thank you so very much.”

Temple Israel, Great Neck, NY – \$1000

Temple Israel wants all members and visitors to feel welcome at their facility. An Accessibility Advisory Group was formed to meet the challenges of making their facilities accessible. The \$1000 Open Hearts Award grant will be used to modify the existing ornamental hand rail at the entrance to the main sanctuary. “The grant to help us extend the main sanctuary railing will make a big difference to our congregants and their guests with special needs,” said Toby Katz, co-chair of the Accessibility Advisory Group. Temple Israel's members will continue to assess the needs of their congregants and work towards providing accommodations so that everyone is able to participate in all facets of synagogue life.

“Temple Israel strives to be a place where everyone feels welcome to experience the power of prayer and community, bringing blessings to our lives and to our world. The \$1000 Open Hearts Award will allow us to extend this welcome more widely and deeply than ever before,” said Rabbi Howard Stecker, Senior Rabbi at Temple Israel.

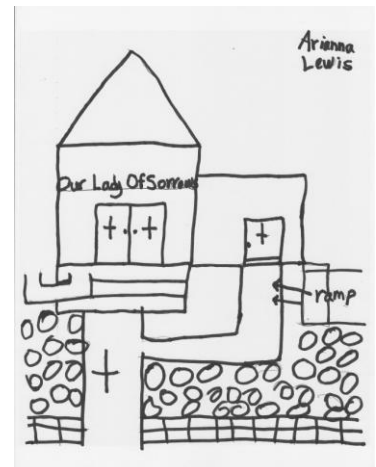
Projects Funded by 2016 Junior Open Hearts Awards

Junior Open Hearts Awards applications are submitted by children ages 5 to 18.

Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, Seboyeta, NM – \$1000

Sister Ellen Corcoran is grateful for the work of Pathways.org Inclusion In Worship. “The information and training you provide has made us more aware of the ways we can make our church accessible and welcoming,” said Sister Ellen. Open Hearts Award grants have been used to install a new ground level floor in the church so that parishioners who use walkers and wheelchairs can easily enter and a front pew was removed to create space for wheelchairs. The 2016 Junior Open Hearts Award application and drawing were submitted by 11 year old parishioner Arianna Lewis. The grant will allow the church to construct an exterior ramp to the meeting room adjacent to the church where accessible washrooms are located.

“Inclusion In Worship has made us aware and attentive to the needs of our parishioners. Being able to accommodate relatives in wheelchairs at funerals has been a tremendous gift to our community and a comfort to grieving families,” shared Sister Ellen.



11 year old Arianna Lewis' drawing of the ramp to the meeting room that Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church will construct with their Junior Open Hearts Award.

About the Open Hearts Awards

The Open Hearts Awards recognize houses of faith across the U.S, for their efforts to welcome worshippers of all abilities and helps fund access and inclusion projects with grants of up to \$1,000. Applications for the Open Hearts Awards and Junior Open Hearts Awards (nominated by children, ages 5-18) are accepted annually. **Deadline for applications is August 1.**

To be eligible for an Open Hearts Award, congregations must submit a completed application form, a video or essay with electronic photos describing the congregation's inclusion efforts and a request for funding for a specific project with costs. Awards are announced the second weekend in October in conjunction with the kick off of congregation's fall Inclusion Awareness Day celebrations.

Since 1997, Inclusion In Worship has recognized more than 200 congregations with grants totaling over \$160,000. For more information and application forms visit www.InclusionInWorship.org, call 1-800-955-2445, or email info@InclusionInWorship.org.

About Inclusion Awareness Day

Inclusion In Worship invites congregations to celebrate Inclusion Awareness Day in their house of faith. Inclusion Awareness Days kickoff annually on the second Sunday in October and continue throughout the fall on dates convenient for congregations. On Inclusion Awareness Day houses of faith take stock of their current access and inclusion efforts and renew their commitments to welcoming worshippers of all abilities as active participants. Visit www.InclusionInWorship.org for interfaith Inclusion Awareness Day Workbooks.

About Inclusion In Worship

Inclusion In Worship is a ministry of Pathways.org, a Chicago based not for profit organization. The interfaith Inclusion In Worship ministry provides grants, videos, educational materials to congregations to help them welcome worshippers of all abilities. Visit www.InclusionInWorship.org for more information.

About Pathways.org

Pathways.org is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to empowering parents and health professionals with FREE tools and resources to maximize a child's motor,

sensory, and communication development. Pathways.org educational materials are shared freely on our website www.Pathways.org. In addition, Pathways.org's state-of-the-art pediatric therapy clinic in Glenview, IL offers best practices in physical, occupational, and speech therapy services. Pathways.org also promotes inclusion in houses of worship with the Inclusion In Worship ministry as well as inclusion in other areas of the community.

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