



CHICAGO (December 10, 2018) — The Inclusion In Worship Ministry of Pathways.org, a Chicago based not-for-profit, is recognizing seven congregations and four ministries with Open Hearts Award grants of up to \$1,000. The grants support efforts to welcome individuals of all abilities as active participants in houses of faith. The winning worshipping communities create accessible environments where individuals of all abilities know they belong and can share their gifts. Grants are awarded for specific, planned projects that further their inclusion efforts. Visit [www.InclusionInWorship.org](http://www.InclusionInWorship.org) for more information and applications.

### **2018 Open Hearts Award Winners**

**Bethlehem Lutheran Church, St. Charles, IL**

**Fredericktown United Methodist Church, Fredericktown, OH**

**Mishkan Chicago, Chicago, IL**

**Mustard Seed Project of Loyola University Chicago Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education**

**Proyecto Samy Inc., Bronx, NY**

**Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago Commission on Mental Illness**

**St. Catherine Laboure Catholic Church, Glenview, IL**

**St. James Catholic Church, Arlington Heights, IL**

**St. John Berchmans Catholic Church, Chicago, IL**

**Twin Falls United Methodist Church, Munroe Falls, OH**

**Wittenberg Lutheran Campus Center, Normal, IL**

Since 1997, Inclusion In Worship has recognized more than 230 congregations, religious schools and ministries with grants totaling over \$180,000. Read about the projects supported by the 2018 Pathways.org Open Hearts Awards grants on the following pages.



## 2018 Open Hearts Awards Projects

### Bethlehem Lutheran Church, St. Charles, IL



*Bethlehem Lutheran Church will use their 2018 Open Hearts Award grant to replace faded and missing accessible parking signs.*

Although Bethlehem Lutheran Church, St. Charles, IL has multiple parking lots on three levels, each offering accessible parking, the signs indicating the availability of accessible parking were faded or missing. The congregation will use their 2018 Open Hearts Award grant to replace seven accessible parking signs. The new signage will improve communication about accessible parking and the commitment of Bethlehem Lutheran Church to creating an accessible and welcoming environment for worshippers of all abilities. The congregation provides an elevator, accessible washrooms, pew cutouts throughout the assembly, an accessible seating area at the front of the sanctuary, assistive listening devices and large print worship

aides. Accessible entrances are clearly marked and mobility aides such as walkers and wheelchairs are available.

"We are thrilled to accept this award on behalf of our community and our congregation's fervent commitment to accessibility. We communicate our commitment to accessibility before people even enter our building with clearly marked accessible parking places. The Open Hearts Awards grant will help us provide helpful, directional signs in our parking lots so that all people, regardless of physical ability, can park and enter our building safely. Thank you for your generosity and partnership in our shared endeavor to welcome people of all abilities, all the time," stated Reverend Sarah Rohde, Pastor, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, St. Charles, IL.

### Fredericktown United Methodist Church, Fredericktown, OH

Fredericktown United Methodist Church will use their 2018 Open Hearts Award grant to create three pew cutouts in the sanctuary to accommodate gliding armchairs for members with chronic back pain, restless leg syndrome and autism. The need for these chairs became evident when the congregation embarked on a yearlong educational journey that included guest speakers, monthly ministry

moments, bulletin inserts, videos and book studies. The process opened the eyes and hearts of members to the importance of welcoming members of all abilities.

The congregation provides accessible parking, a covered drop off area, valet parking, automatic door openers, ramps to the worship area and social hall, assistive listening devices and noise reduction headphones for members with noise sensitivity. Accessible washrooms and large print bibles are also available.

"This grant will enable us to better welcome and provide a nurturing environment to those who often feel ostracized from the church and God's love. It is a huge step in continuing to extend the church's outreach. Thank you," said Reverend Richard Hasley, pastor.



*Fredericktown United Methodist Church will use their Open Hearts Award grant to create three pew cutouts furnished with gliding armchairs.*

### **Mishkan Chicago, Chicago, IL**



*Mishkan Chicago will provide a sign language interpreter for worship services with their Open Hearts Award grant.*

Mishkan Chicago, a Jewish faith community in Chicago, meets for musical prayer, learning and holidays in synagogues, homes and event venues all around the city. The community will use the 2018 Open Hearts Award grant to help defray the cost of providing sign language interpretation for Shabbat services, High Holidays and other Jewish holidays throughout the year. Individuals who are deaf have expressed appreciation for the interpreter service and parents of children with ADD have stated that having the interpreter present helped their loved one stay engaged in the liturgy.

"This grant means we can move forward on our inclusion efforts and help people gain access to Jewish holidays they wouldn't otherwise have. Our interpreters translate both English and Hebrew so that folks aren't left out of any part of the service. We are so beyond thrilled to receive this grant and cannot wait to offer more ASL interpreting at our events, services, and holiday experiences," said Ellie Spitz, LCSW, Director of Community Engagement and Wellness at Mishkan Chicago.

Rabbi Lizzi Heydemann, founder of Mishkan Chicago, stated, "We aim at radical inclusivity— including the widest possible range of people who want to find purpose, connection, joy and inspiration through Jewish spiritual practice. The Open Hearts Award is a great bolster to these efforts, helping both hearing and non-hearing people experience American Sign Language and opening up our services to people who would otherwise not be able to fully enjoy the experience. We are so, so grateful to Pathways and the Open Hearts Award for this recognition and support."

### **Mustard Seed Project of Loyola University Chicago Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education**

The Greeley Center for Catholic Education sponsors the annual Mustard Seed Project Conference to enable Catholic Schools from across the U.S. to develop plans and receive coaching on how best to include students of all abilities. The 2018 Open Hearts Award grant supported conference expenses and scholarships for Catholic School faculty.



*The Greeley Center for Catholic Education used their Open Hearts Award grant to support the 2018 Mustard Seed Conference: Inclusive Practices in Catholic Schools.*

"Increasingly, Catholic schools are responding to the call to open their doors to students with disabilities, yet they are in need of supports and guidance in order to effectively build more inclusive environments. The Open Hearts Award grant will be so helpful in supporting the conference expenses of the Mustard Seed Project and bringing best practices in inclusive education to Catholic Schools," said Dr. Michael Boyle, Director, Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education.

### **Proyecto Samy Inc., Bronx, NY**

Proyecto Samy Inc. will use their Open Hearts Award grant to create sensory stations at the entrances to the worship space and in religious education classrooms in three churches in the Dominican Republic. The sensory stations will provide sensory toys, fidget toys, sensory sacks and sensory mini-mats to help children with autism, ADD, ADHD and developmental disabilities stay in worship services, fellowship activities and Sunday school classes. Teams at each church will set up the stations, collect toys at the end of services, store the items and set up the



*Ana De Cunha is one of three project managers who will oversee children's sensory stations at three churches in the Dominican Republic, thanks to a 2018 Open Hearts Award grant.*

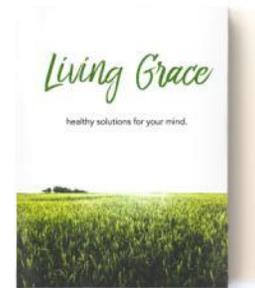
stations each week. Sensory items have been shown to relieve anxiety in children with sensory processing disorders. By meeting this need, Proyecto Samy Inc., will help families to stay in worship settings longer and will help staff to include children of varying abilities in Sunday school.

Johanna Santana, Executive Director of Proyecto Samy Inc., is grateful for the 2018 Open Hearts Award grant. "The endeavor of building a community that welcomes and integrates individuals with different abilities requires three essential components: 1.) a calling that usually emerges out of personal experience, 2.) a group of

vision-sharing colleagues, professionals, and volunteers, and 3.) a community with the willingness to learn, change, and embrace the underserved. However, there will not be any success without the appropriate resources. Proyecto Samy Inc. is grateful to Pathways.org for supporting our endeavor to provide sensory stations for children in need of this support in three houses of faith," said Johanna.

### **Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago Commission on Mental Illness**

Deacon Tom Lambert, Co-Director of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago Commission on Mental Illness and Deacon at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel parish, Chicago, will use an Open Hearts Award grant to purchase Grace Alliance workbooks for Mental Health Outreach workshops in parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago. The 16-week series of workshops is an innovative and grace-filled mental health solution and community support initiative for those experiencing a personal journey with depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions. The workshops will provide a ministry of accompaniment for individuals and families with mental health concerns. The parish workshops will let individuals and their families know that they are welcomed as part of the parish community and alleviate the stigma often associated with mental health



*Dc. Tom Lambert will use an Open Hearts Award grant to purchase Living Grace workbooks for a series of parish workshops to support parishioners with mental health concerns and their families.*

concerns. “Stigma causes isolation, even isolation from the faith community. We want to create a supportive place so that people can get spiritual comfort and healing within the parish community,” said Deacon Lambert.

“I am grateful for the Open Hearts Award grant which will allow the Commission on Mental Illness to reach more families in the Archdiocese of Chicago,” stated Deacon Lambert.

### **St. Catherine Laboure Catholic Church, Glenview, IL**

Jaden Dias, a fourteen year old parishioner at St. Catherine Laboure parish in Glenview, IL, is proud of the many ways his parish includes people of all abilities. From the accessible parking spaces, curb cuts and automatic door openers at the entrances to the accessible washrooms, low gluten hosts, large print bulletins and missalettes, St. Catherine’s cultivates a spirit of inclusion.

Jaden wrote in his Junior Open Hearts Award essay that “Jesus is our role model and he loves each and every one of us. We have a duty to follow his example and welcome all people to participate with us at Mass.”

“As the Inclusion Representative for the parish, I am extremely grateful to Pathways.org Inclusion In Worship for the financial assistance as well as the educational materials, lesson plans and Inclusion Awareness Day planning materials available at

[www.InclusionInWorship.org](http://www.InclusionInWorship.org),” said Janice Seipp.

“Pathways Open Hearts Awards have been a blessing to St. Catherine Laboure’s Inclusion Ministry. Last year the grant provided additional assistive listening devices for the church. This year the grant will be used to purchase a sound system transmitter for the gymnasium building, making the devices available in the recreation room and social hall. Now parishioners who are hard of hearing will be able to hear speakers at parish events,” said Janice.

Under the leadership of Father Maina Waithaka, Saint Catherine Laboure has become an outstanding example of building a caring, accessible and inclusive worshipping community where parishioners of all abilities participate.



*St. Catherine Laboure parish will use their Open Hearts Award grant to expand their assistive listening devices to their social hall.*

## St. James Catholic Church, Arlington Heights, IL

St. James Catholic Church is in the midst of the “Open Our Hearts in Welcome” construction project to create a fully accessible worship space through renovation and expansion. The current church building opened in 1952 and has not undergone major construction changes since then. Renovation plans will make the church accessible and include nearby accessible parking spaces, a ground level entrance, hearing loop, accessible bathrooms, pew cut outs and an elevator.



*Accessible parking spaces and a ground level, canopied entrance are among the accessible features of the Open Hearts Award winning renovation design at St. James Catholic Church.*

"The Open Hearts Award grant will support our efforts to welcome our entire parish community into worship including those with mobility issues. This award supports our desire to preserve and honor the dignity of all. We are grateful to Pathways for this recognition," stated Fr. Matt Foley, Pastor, St. James Catholic Church.

## St. John Berchmans Catholic Church, Chicago, IL

At St. John Berchmans Catholic Church, the parish Motto, “All Are Welcome,” drives efforts to create an accessible and welcoming parish plant. The congregation raised funds to install a two stop elevator to the upper level church and the lower level hall. Accessible washrooms in the lower level church hall and a ramp to the altar are also available. The 2018 Pathways Open Hearts Award grant will be used to renovate the washroom nearest the worship space. Parishioners who need an accessible washroom will no longer have to travel an extended distance to use the accessible washrooms in the church hall.

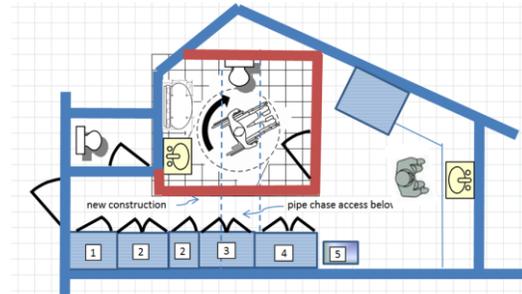


*St. John Berchmans Catholic Church will use their Open Hearts Award grant to upgrade the washroom nearest the worship space for members with disabilities.*

“Two Open Hearts Award grants have helped to make our parish motto, ‘All Are Welcome,’ a reality. Thank you for your continued support,” said Joe D’Arco, Director of Operations at St. John Berchmans parish.

## Twin Falls United Methodist Church, Munroe Falls, OH

Twin Falls United Methodist Church will use their 2018 Open Hearts Award grant to create an accessible family restroom on the sanctuary level of the church. The new accessible washroom will be fitted with an accessible sink with accessible faucet handles, grab bars at the accessible toilet, accessible towel dispenser plus a wall mount changing table. The washroom will assist members of all abilities and families with young children.



*Twin Falls United Methodist Church will create an accessible family washroom with the help of their Open Hearts Award grant.*

The church has been working on identifying barriers to worship with a Disability Awareness Team. The team has audited the church campus and has developed a long-term plan to break down any barriers to including worshipers of all abilities. Their primary concern was to have accessible restrooms on both the sanctuary level and the fellowship level of the church. In addition, the church has installed new accessible parking spaces and entrance ramps.

“Our congregation has always had an open heart for all and a desire to include persons of all abilities. Our aging building made it difficult for us to be a welcoming community to persons with accessibility needs. We are very grateful for this award. It allows us to break down barriers and enables all to come for worship and fellowship to Twin Falls UMC,” said Reverend Van Fisher, pastor.

## Wittenberg Lutheran Campus Center, Normal, IL

The Wittenberg Lutheran Campus Center meets the spiritual needs of college age students, faculty and staff of Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, Heartland Community College and Lincoln College. Throughout the school year the Center provides Sunday morning worship and Bible study as well as bible study and worship services throughout the week.

Wishing to be accessible to all, the center has redesigned the parking lot to provide accessible parking adjacent to entrances and provides a sign language interpreter for services.



*The Wittenberg Lutheran Campus Center will use their Open Hearts Award grant to help fund automatic door openers on two exterior entrances.*

The 2018 Open Hearts Awards grant will be used to purchase and install automatic door openers at both exterior entrances for a young woman who uses a motorized wheelchair.

"We want to include as many people as we can when we proclaim the Good News. This generous grant puts us on the way toward improving our outreach to people who face accessibility challenges. Thank God for the work of Pathways.org," said Reverend William Jensen, Campus Pastor.

### **About the Open Hearts Awards**

The Open Hearts Awards recognize houses of faith and religious schools for their efforts to welcome individuals 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. Watch [www.InclusionInWorship.org](http://www.InclusionInWorship.org) for the 2019 application deadline.

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.

Since 1997, Inclusion In Worship has recognized more than 230 congregations, religious schools and ministries with grants totaling over \$180,000. The goal is to encourage houses of faith and religious schools to welcome individuals of all abilities. For more information and application forms visit [www.InclusionInWorship.org](http://www.InclusionInWorship.org), call 1-800-955-2445, or email [friends@pathways.org](mailto:friends@pathways.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](http://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 and educational materials to help congregations welcome worshipers of all abilities. Visit [www.InclusionInWorship.org](http://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](http://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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