



Since 1991, 121 churches in 29 states and the District of Columbia have received Union Presbyterian Seminary Congregational Leadership Awards.

Presenting the 2016 Award Recipients:

(Judging panelists' comments are italicized)



Coastal Community Church of Grover Beach, CA

received this year's **James Goodpasture Award for excellence in ministry to persons with developmental disabilities and their families.** Pastor Andy Rock of Coastal Community Church writes: "Sundays are celebrations. If you were to visit our church for the first time, you would be greeted by one of our disabled friends. They would pass you a bulletin and welcome you to worship. You would immediately notice a row of wheelchairs in the front of the sanctuary with children and adults in them, dancing to the music. You would see a blind man, Jason, playing the piano along with a full worship band. You would notice everyone in the congregation smiling, greeting, and embracing our disabled friends – it would feel like a celebration." Outreach to people with disabilities includes specific efforts tailored to children, youth, and adults, and over forty church members are regularly involved in the ministry efforts.

"This congregation has worked to integrate people with disabilities into their worship, Christian education, and fellowship activities. Programs emphasize the importance of providing agency and leadership opportunities to individuals with special challenges."



First Presbyterian Church of Staunton, VA

received this year's W.T. "Tolly" Thompson Award for ministry in the field of Christian education. Helping Hands Day Camp is a cooperative Vacation Bible School supported by four downtown churches in Staunton, Virginia (First Presbyterian, Central United Methodist, Emmanuel Episcopal, and Trinity Episcopal). More than just an ordinary Bible School, its goal is to reach out and share the Gospel with families in the community and provide programming for those not able to afford a full week of traditional camp offerings by other agencies and organizations. At a low price to parents that is subsidized by donations from each church, the weeklong camp features daily Bible study, music, arts and crafts, and a community service project by campers. The camp has also spurred other joint outreach efforts by the churches involved.

"An impressive effort in the field of Christian education, focused on the needs of those who may be unable to afford other opportunities for summer camps and childhood development opportunities."



Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church of Mount Pleasant, SC

received this year's Elinor Curry Award for its ministry of outreach and social concern that addresses the call of the church to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God," and in so doing changes the congregation. Hope House and Hope Cottage provide free housing for adults with a family member in a local Intensive Care Unit. Since opening, the three bedrooms at Hope House and one in Hope Cottage have provided comfort for approximately 550 family members of trauma patients – stroke victims, accident victims, transplant recipients, and others. Hope House guests are average people for whom the cost of an extended hotel stay is prohibitive. At Hope House they find an inviting home-like environment, a quiet place to pray, comfort in the company of the other guests and caring volunteers, food in the refrigerator and a washer and dryer to do their laundry. There is no charge to guests; however, they are asked to do simple chores around the house, keep their rooms clean and be respectful of other guests. For guests who can afford to contribute to their stay, a donation of \$5 a day is suggested. People come to Hope House from all over the state and country. They are referred by social workers at MUSC (Medical University of South Carolina) and other area hospitals who work with the families of patients and see how difficult it is for family members to sleep night after night on hospital cots or waiting room chairs. They know that only the well-to-do can afford a long-term stay in an area hotel. They refer their clients to Hope House where they know the family members will be welcomed and offered physical as well as spiritual and emotional comfort.

"This ministry fulfills an important role that combines outreach and pastoral sensitivity. It is certainly worthy of recognition by the Elinor Curry Award. The congregation has acted innovatively to cover a missing gap in services to people experiencing tremendous stress and pain as they hope for the healing of their loved ones."



The Federated Church (PCUSA/UCC) of Fergus Falls, MN

received this year's Katherine Hawes Award for its effective youth ministry that engages youth in all areas of the church's mission, extending beyond the church into the community and the world. The Timothy Fellowship is designed to mentor young men and women who have recently graduated from high school and are considering a career in ministry by providing them with an opportunity to work in a congregational setting as they discern their call from God. The two-year, part-time internship consists of multiple phases intended to deepen the individual's faith, expose the Timothy Fellow to practical experience in congregational life, and explore options for future education and development. The Fellowship expresses the congregation's commitment to encouraging youth to invest in the church and a lifetime of discipleship and mission.

"An innovative approach toward fostering young men and women in their initial period of discernment of a call to ordained ministry or Christian education. The congregation is to be commended for their active, systematic approach to supporting the discernment process. The current Fellow, Jordan Schiefert, has not only benefited from the program but added significantly to the mission of the congregation."