

2017 — American Baptist Women's Ministries Announces 2017 Recipients of Shine the Light Award

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The Shine the Light Award, established by American Baptist Women's Ministries, ABCUSA, serves to recognize women who serve as outstanding light-bearers for Christ. The award highlights a specific ministry project or projects that best demonstrate how the individual or group receiving the award have spread the light of Christ through their congregation, their community, or the world; it highlights creativity and collaboration in ministry.

Averhart, Hawthorne, and Moore are members of the Outreach Ministry of St. John Missionary Baptist Church, which has the purpose that, "by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, demonstrating His love by our actions, services, communicating and sharing God's Word." Nominator Mildred Archie shared the many ways that Averhart, Hawthorne, and Moore fulfill this purpose through their ministries in the church and community.

Maria Averhart launched in 2007 Operation Give Back, a project founded at first to give backpacks and school supplies to underprivileged children at the beginning of the school year. It has since expanded to include clothing, shoes, food, and furniture as well. Maria and other volunteers minister to clients while they're waiting in line, and last year over 25 people gave their lives to Christ through this ministry.

Helen Hawthorne and Valerie Moore founded the Thanksgiving Annual Feast in 2012, put on by their congregation for members of the community, including publicity sent to local pantries, high-rise communities, homeless shelters, schools and grocery stores. Each year, 75-100 people are served. During the feast, church members are greeters, and sit at the tables with participants for conversation. Volunteers from other congregations, youth groups, and culinary staffs pitch in as well.

Additionally, Valerie Moore, a Certified Nurse Practitioner and Health Consultant, coordinates the Your Health ministry. In this role, she provides information on current health events in the community, writes articles on health issues for the quarterly St. John Chronicle publication, and creates partnerships with area medical providers for services such as flu shots, diabetes testing, blood tests, and studies, such as studying the effects of salt on health. Moore's goal is to create a church-based health clinic at St. John and increase people's knowledge of resources available in the community.

American Baptist Women's Ministries' Executive Director Virginia Holmstrom commended the recipients of this year's Shine the Light Award. "These three women are being recognized for their leadership of Christ-centered ministries in their communities. Their response to persons in need truly shines light on Jesus's compassionate identity with those who hunger and thirst, the sick, and the rejected ones in our society, as told in Matthew 25:35-36."

Maria Averhart, Helen Hawthorne, and Valerie Moore will be presented with the 2017 Shine the Light Award at the AB Women's Ministries' Women's Day, Friday, June 30, at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Oregon, prior to the American Baptist Churches USA Biennial Mission Summit.

Past recipients of the Shine the Light Award, more information about the award and the nomination process may be found on the American Baptist Women's Ministries website at www.abwministries.org/shinethelight, or contact the AB Women's Ministries office at (610) 768-2288 or info@abwministries.org. Nomination forms for the 2018 award will be available in the fall of 2017.