

RESOURCES:

Shine the Light Award

The "Shine the Light" award, established by American Baptist Women's Ministries, recognizes outstanding light-bearers for Christ.

The award honors exemplary women from local American Baptist churches for how they shine Christ's light in the world.

The Shine the Light Award celebrates those women who develop new partnerships (collaboration), find new and different ways to be Christ's hands and feet (creativity), develop new means of outreach and spreading God's word (communication), and serve God's people (commission).

The award may be given to an individual American Baptist woman or to a group of women from an American Baptist church (person and/or group must be a current member(s) of an American Baptist Church). The award will highlight a specific ministry project(s) that best demonstrates how the individual or group is Christ's light-bearer.

One award will be granted in a year; award presentations are made at an annual gathering hosted by American Baptist Women's Ministries. In addition to the presentation, information about the recipient will be included in the event materials, a letter of announcement will be sent to the pastor of the recipient's church, and a letter of announcement will be sent to the executive minister of the region.



For more information
[Click here to download Shine the Light Award Brochure 2024](#)

To make a nomination
 Anyone may nominate an individual or a group who fits the criteria. (People should not, however, nominate themselves.) A selection committee will consider all nominations received at the national American Baptist Women's Ministries office by **February 14**.
[Click here to submit a nomination online.](#)
[Click here to download the nomination form \(PDF format\).](#)

2024 Shine the Light Award Recipient

This year's honoree is **Arleeta Karz** of Trumansburg, New York. Arleeta Karz is the 2024 Shine the Light Award recipient for her exceptional leadership and community service at Searsburg Community Church. During COVID, she organized creative prayer initiatives and Bible studies, fostering spiritual growth. Arleeta actively volunteers at local food pantries and with meal deliveries, and she initiated collections for the homeless, ensuring generous donations.

Her leadership in church projects, such as building a ramp and organizing a yard sale, has strengthened the church's mission. Arleeta's guidance has heightened community awareness and response, encouraging members to give back and support neighbors in need.

Previous Recipients

- 2023: Ms. Laura Austin of First Baptist Church of Mansfield, Mansfield Center, CT** Ms. Austin serves as the ABWM President of Connecticut since the early 2000s. Ms. Austin has traveled the world doing 'hands-on' ministry—she has embroidered messages of hope and Christian love on them as signs of devotion to God for doctors and patients, built travel kits for newly graduated health builders, constructed and repaired decks and roofs, did home repairs and bathroom upgrades, cooked curry for pastors and missionaries, built "rubble houses," nurtured earthquake victims, participated in disaster relief efforts, and has donated many supplies to support ministries. Locally, Ms. Austin volunteers weekly with FoodShare, is a retail rescue driver, serves on the Advisory Board of Willimantic Salvation Army, cooks lunch for Vacation Bible School, became a Red Kettle ringer, handed out Thanksgiving turkeys, knitted 32 hats for the Warm Hearts Warm Souls campaign and more! Monthly, Ms. Austin coordinates the team of cooks who prepare meals for 50 homeless and low-income people in Willimantic. Ms. Austin has facilitated the building, installation, and ongoing restocking of a Little Free Pantry at her church.
- 2022: Ms. Winona Hauge of the Mount Zion Baptist Church, Seattle, WA** Ms. Hauge was described as "a woman of faith and has been a member of Mount Zion Baptist Church for over forty years." Among her many noteworthy ministry endeavors, Ms. Hauge co-chairs the health ministry at her church. Through her leadership, her church began a collaborative effort to develop a COVID Partnership Outreach Initiative, culminating in successfully vaccinating over 3,500 members of the community! Winona also volunteers as a driver to deliver meals to seniors and other insecure populations. In addition, she has been a member of the Bible Study Fellowship Program for over 30 years, and in the last six years, she has served as a group leader.
 In addition to her Christian service, Ms. Hauge previously served as a US Public Health Service Officer, a manager at Fred Hutch Cancer Center, and a Manager of Social Work at the Odessa Brown Children's Clinic.
- 2020: Beth Daly of Middletown First Baptist Church, Middletown OH** Every Wednesday evening in Middletown, Ohio, children of all ages look forward to the end of their school day. They are not disengaged from their academic community. Instead, they are excited to bring what they are learning in school to the J-Lab. J-Lab is an afterschool program where K-6th grade children explore science and faith through hands-on experiments and activities. The original lessons created by Beth encourages kids to implement their own creative expressions. Beth is praised for her commitment to creating new and fresh ways to engage youth, such as a biblically themed escape room. Daly is a committed member of her ABWM circle and leads her church's elementary Sunday school. The afterschool ministry led by Beth is consistent with American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) mission, purpose and core values. We are a Christ-centered ministry which focuses on engaging and empowering women, young adult women, and girls to be leaders in their churches and communities. Beth's ministry strikes a chord with ABWM as we recently launched AB GIRLS program that features AB GIRLS Christian curriculum and local STEAM providers (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math). STEAM impacts our daily choices and we are excited to introduce girls to this exciting career as well as denominational career opportunities.
- 2019: Daughters of The King of Montgomery Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio.** Julie Hayes, Maryanne Weeks, Jenn Ellis, Rachel King, Shay Rothstein, and Megan Fennema lead Daughters of The King, a ministry to mothers and their daughters in 6th-8th grade that calls out their identity in Jesus Christ. Through Daughters of The King's 10-week program, mothers and daughters learn together that their worth and value are not found in how they look but in who they are in Jesus Christ. Through fun events like a fashion show that focuses on modesty and creativity, interactive father/daughter dates, and mother/daughter outings, many young women have learned what it means to be cherished, loved and known by their Heavenly Father. Each class focuses on God's word, prayer and facilitated discussion. The community that is developed is rich leading these young ladies to become friends.
- 2018: Nancy Byleen, a member of First Baptist Church in West Allis, Wisconsin.** Byleen was nominated by Rev. Kim Drost, who is also a member of First Baptist Church in West Allis and witnessed Byleen's dedication to serving Chin refugees who arrived in the area in the late 2000's. Rev. Drost says, "Her self-deprecating 'Aw, shucks, I didn't do much' belies her true worth and value to AB Women's Ministries and the church. I appreciate how she has exemplified being the hands and feet of Christ's work in the... community around her." [Click here to read more.](#)
- 2017: Maria Averhart, Helen Hawthorne, and Valerie Moore 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. [Click here to read more.](#)
- 2016: Beth Hettrick Berry of the Wakefield Baptist Church in Wakefield, Rhode Island,** for her outstanding ministry work with students with special needs through the drama performance organization she founded, GEAR (Give Everyone a Role). Additionally, when realizing that once these students graduated they no longer had performance opportunities available to them, Beth collaborated with community agencies to create productions involving special needs adults cast alongside other actors and musicians. Beth also volunteers at the state Baptist camp and works with children and youth in the congregation. Her nominator, Nancy Bancroft, noted especially that Beth's "everyday witness cannot be missed by all those with whom she works."
- 2015: Cindy Kissane of the First Baptist Church of Syracuse, Jamesville, New York,** for her outstanding ministry in leading and coordinating two mission ministries at the First Baptist Church of Syracuse for the last five years: meals at the Samaritan Center (a Syracuse-area soup kitchen) twice a year; and a collaborative project that Kissane developed with the Jamesville-Dewitt Ecumenical Food Pantry to distribute literacy materials for infants through 18-year-olds to client families with children.
- 2014: Carolyn Argust and Karen Brokaw of Lake Avenue Baptist Church, Rochester, New York,** for their outreach ministry bearing the light of Christ to refugees and immigrants in Rochester; including a tutoring program in partnership with a public library that includes leadership development opportunities.
- 2013: Rev. Barbara Jim-George of Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California,** for her work in the prevention of human trafficking through a primary prevention faith-based curriculum she has developed for teen girls aged 11-16 named the Girls' Right of Passage Program. **Darlene Pennington was also recognized, posthumously, for her ministries at the First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Nebraska, and in her community.** Darlene had served in multiple leadership roles at the church and she and her husband had also served as foster parents and foster parent trainers.
- 2012: Mrs. Elizabeth Gooden and Mrs. Sybil Jones of Antioch Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio,** were recognized for their devoted commitment to the Open Door Fellowship, a ministry to incarcerated and previously incarcerated individuals, as well as the many other ways they serve in ministry.
- 2011: the women of the First Baptist Church in Selma, California,** were recognized for work they did on behalf of victims and survivors of sex trafficking through the American Baptist Women's Ministries-sponsored national mission project, Break the Chains: Slavery in the 21st Century.

