

Foundation salutes excellence in missions

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WACO—The Texas Baptist Missions Foundation presented its annual Adventurer, Innovator and Pioneer Awards during a luncheon at Texas Baptists' annual meeting.

Charles Whiteside from First Baptist Church in Kilgore received the Adventurer Award, given to an individual or organization who has advanced missions through outstanding financial support or leadership in ministry opportunities.

In presenting the award, John LaNoue, veteran Texas Baptist disaster relief leader, remarked how Whiteside always has worked hard and enthusiastically in all he does. He recalled recruiting Whiteside's help years ago to build a mobile health clinic to send to the Rio Grande Valley.

"We prayed as much as we worked, and we built that mobile clinic in a school bus in about 22 days," LaNoue said. "Recently, now that he's retired, he became a chaplain, and now he has an outreach to business groups. You just can't stop the guy! He started a whole new avenue of service for the Lord."

John Crowder, pastor of First Baptist Church in West, accepted the Innovator Award, presented to the church by Tim Randolph, director of the Waco Regional Baptist Association.

The Innovator Award recognizes those who provide a model for missions that others can follow and duplicate. First Baptist in West set an example for other churches in its nimble response to the fertilizer plant explosion that rocked its town in 2013.

The church had spent years building trust throughout the community, making it uniquely positioned to respond when the time came. In the wake of tragedy, the church met physical and spiritual needs.

“Our church is experiencing a tremendous revival. In each of the past two years, I’ve baptized more people than probably in the 20 previous years combined,” Crowder said. “It is remarkable to see what God is doing in our community, in our church.”

Kay Bacon, mission associate at First Baptist Church of Temple, accepted the Pioneer Award on behalf of her church. Jerry Carlisle, vice president of the Texas Baptist Missions Foundation, presented this award. The Pioneer Award celebrates individuals or churches who have demonstrated longtime leadership in beginning mission work that has impacted Texas Baptist life.

“They’ve relied on the power of the Holy Spirit, and they’ve embedded and entangled missions,” Carlisle said. “It’s not a program at First Baptist Church of Temple. It’s a theme, a purpose, a vision that influences everything.”

At the luncheon, Texas Baptist Missions Foundation President Bill Arnold announced a fund-raising initiative to build a new Baptist Student Ministries building on the Texas Tech University campus. A \$800,000 lead gift has been secured toward this effort, and additional contributions are needed to bring this project to life, he said.

Lauren Sturdy works for Buckner International.