

McNeal receives award for interim ministry

October 4, 2016

DALLAS—E.L. “Skip” McNeal received an award Sept. 22 for his contributions in interim ministry in Texas Baptist churches.

McNeal received the MWD Award during a luncheon at a continuing-education event for Texas Baptists’ Interim Ministry Network. The MWD Award is named for three Texas Baptist leaders instrumental in developing the state’s intentional interim ministry program—Dick Maples, Charles Lee Williamson and Jan Daehnert.

McNeal entered interim ministry after he retired as pastor of First Baptist Church in Sanger, where he served 30 years. He completed specialized intentional interim ministry training offered by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

After he served as a full-time traditional interim pastor at First Baptist Church in Alpine, his first intentional interim pastorate was at First Baptist Church in Huntsville. The intentional interim process is designed to help churches through challenging times, with the pastor serving as coach to a transition team in the congregation.

When McNeal arrived, the Huntsville church’s active membership had declined more than 50 percent, and nearly all the remaining members were senior adults.

The year after McNeal’s tenure, the church had added more than 90 members, primarily young families with children, said Karl Fickling, coordinator of Texas Baptists’ Interim Ministry.

McNeal is completing an intentional interim pastorate at University Baptist Church in Fort Worth. During the interim period, McNeal has led in outreach, shepherded members, modeled ministry for the staff, and helped individuals struggling with life's most difficult times, Fickling noted.

He also guided the church through a self-study that helps congregations address issues before calling a new pastor.

"UBC is positioned for a positive future with the calling of a new pastor," Fickling said. "Dr. McNeal is quick to honor the hard work of the transition teams and the members of the churches he has served. He is careful to give all the praise to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, it is clear that he is gifted to assist churches during their interim transition time, and he is well-deserving to be the 2016 recipient of the MWD Award of the BGCT."