

# TULSA WORLD

## Jerry Falwell's career, commitment recalled

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By BILL SHERMAN World Religion Writer

The Moral Majority founder was perhaps the most controversial member of the Christian right.

The Rev. Jerry Falwell's death last Tuesday drew reactions from leaders across the religious and political spectrums.

Falwell was loved by some and despised by others, but few will argue that his Moral Majority did not change the face of American politics.

The Moral Majority unified and galvanized the political power of what has been called the religious right, and played a part in the emergence of American conservatism in the 1980s.

His funeral will be Tuesday at his Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va.

Here is a sample of what people are saying, from various sources:

Pastor Deron Spoo, First Baptist Church, Tulsa:

"While I did not agree with the level with which he mixed politics into religion, I did respect his qualities of leadership. He had the natural charisma of a leader."

Pastor Bob Green, Arrow Heights Baptist Church, Broken Arrow:

"He was certainly a leader among evangelicals and conservatives. He probably did more than anyone else to keep the Christian populace aware of critical matters involving rights, public schools and legal issues. He's left a deep imprint." Pastor Nick Garland, First Baptist Church, Broken Arrow:

"Dr. Falwell was a man of deep convictions regarding God and the Bible, which influenced all that he did in life.

"As a result, he was a great pastor, building a 24,000-member church; a great visionary who built a highly respected university, and was thrust onto the national stage as a voice of conservative Christian beliefs.

"And, he did all of that from the small Virginia town where he was reared." Anthony L. Jordan, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma:

"Dr. Jerry Falwell was a very influential leader among conservative Christians. Many will remember him as a lightning rod on moral issues. But for me, his greatest legacies and life impacts are the establishment of one of the great churches in America, a world-class university and a myriad of ministries to hurting humanity.

"Above all, Dr. Falwell was committed to carrying the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the Earth."

Pat Robertson, televangelist:

"Jerry has been a tower of strength on many of the moral issues which have confronted our nation. . . . Jerry's courage and strength of convictions will be sadly missed in this time of increasing moral relativism." Billy Graham:

"We did not always agree on everything, but I knew him to be a man of God. . . . He leaves a gigantic vacuum in the evangelical world." Larry Flynt, publisher of Hustler Magazine, sued for publishing a parody of Falwell:

"I hated everything he stood for, but after meeting him in person, years after the trial, Jerry Falwell and I became good friends." Richard Land, president of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, Southern Baptist Convention:

"Dr. Falwell's home-going leaves an enormous gap in the leadership ranks of evangelical Christianity in America and around the world." C. Welton Gaddy, president of The Interfaith Alliance:

"Although we did not see eye to eye, he was a formidable spokesman for his point of view. We shared a fierce patriotism and strong beliefs about the importance of religion in politics, which took different paths."

Pastor Rick Warren, author of "The Purpose Driven Life":

"Jerry Falwell was one of the giant figures who towered over the 20th-century American church."

**Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force:**

**"We will always remember him as . . . someone who demonized and vilified us for political gain and someone who used religion to divide rather than unite our nation."**

President George Bush:

"Jerry lived a life of faith and called upon men and women of all backgrounds to believe in God and serve their communities."