

**FEATURES**
produced by Baptist PressSBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
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July 26, 1976

76-121

Fred Roach--Blending
Business and the Bible

By Orville Scott

DALLAS (BP)--Fred Roach, a Baptist layman and president of the second-largest home builder in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, finds excitement in helping other laymen understand the call to ministry by using "gifts" God has given them in Christian service.

Friends ask where Roach derives the time and energy to serve as chief executive of Centennial Homes, a United Fund and Boy Scout leader, a leader in suburban Richardson Heights Baptist Church here, a husband and father of two teenagers, and still lead lay renewal emphases across the country. Roach "gracefully" blends business and the Bible, a friend not s.

Roach's spiritual journey and ultimate discovery of his personal mission began early. His father died when Fred was nine, and the boy helped with the family ironing and other housework. But he also found time to read the Bible and take part in Alapattah Baptist Church in Miami, Fla.

He recalls, "I was sitting on my front steps watching the sun set across the Everglades when the need to trust Jesus Christ as my Savior came over me. I realized that Jesus wanted me to trust him, so as a boy I did."

When Roach was 20 he married Gloria Donaldson. Then followed two years in Germany with the United States Army. Next the couple struggled to attend the University of Florida. Financial strain and other tensions led to a prayer experience that he says revolutionized their lives.

Riding with Gloria along a country road, he prayed, "Dear God, I need peace. I don't know what you want me to do with my life, but I promise not to worry about it any more. I turn it all over to you. Whatever you want, I'll do."

After graduation, Roach became a Certified Public Accountant. General Development Corporation convinced him to become their assistant controller in 1961, and nine years later he became president.

As president of the sixth largest corporation in Florida with 6,500 employees, he became active in every phase of community life in Miami. He was president of the United Fund, Boy Scouts, and board member for the largest bank in the city.

He and three other businessmen got together and prayed for God to show them how they could reach into the top leadership of the city of Miami for Jesus Christ. They decided after prayer to start a prayer breakfast fellowship.

During one of the first prayer breakfast meetings, Roach was asked to relate an experience he had during a Lay Renewal Weekend. The outgoing president of the United Fund, president of a federated chain store, approached Roach and asked him if he thought they could have a Lay Renewal Weekend at the Episcopal church where he was a member.

Roach was amazed. Only a few months earlier, he had asked the man, Martin Clark, about his relationship with the church and Clark had replied, "I give my wife and my money to the church, and I think that's enough."

Because of Clark's enthusiasm, however, the small Episcopal church which had an average attendance of about 200 held a Lay Renewal Weekend with more than 950 attending.

"The most exciting thing about that weekend is that Martin Clark was saved," Roach said. "I loved those 950 people present, but I love Martin Clark more because he is my brother (spiritually)," Roach said. Clark is now coordinating Lay Renewal Weekends in Ohio where he is national president of the Gold Circle Stores.

Roach was happy during those years in Miami, feeling that God had given him a vision for bringing lay renewal to the city, and leading him to become moderator of the Miami Baptist Association.

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But about three years ago, Roach became convinced that God wanted him to make a change. "When I left General Development three years ago to join the Weyerhaeuser Corporation, I couldn't understand that," he confides.

"But I had been up in North Carolina to look over a subdivision and told a member of my board of directors we ought to buy the company that owned it for about \$2 million," he recalls. The board member, however, suggested instead that General Development owned an affiliated company that had the mortgage.

"They aren't going to be able to pay the mortgage--we'll just foreclose," he suggested. Roach, however, could not do business that way. He drove to the prayer garden at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, N.C., burdened about whether to leave the company.

As he looked at the water flowing down a stream in the garden at Ridgecrest, he felt God was saying to him: "Just go, just do what I want you to do." Relieved, he went back home and resigned.

Some of his business associates advised him to sell his stock, which he bought for \$250,000, at the current market value of \$1 million before he announced his resignation. But Roach refused. He waited until after he had resigned and sold the stock at a loss of \$70,000.

"But that didn't bother me one bit," he recalls. "I'd given that stock to God, and I knew he didn't need my money--He only needed me. So I told God that just like I had given Him the profit on that stock, likewise I was giving Him the loss too."

Since moving to Dallas, Roach has helped form a prayer group with 12 presidents of Dallas companies.

"We meet and talk about where we hurt and just pray for one another," he explains.

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Adapted from the August 1976 issue of World Mission Journal

(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

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328-Year-Old Tree Grew
Up With U.S. Baptists

By Phyllis A. Desbrien

Baptist Press
7/26/76

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--The Missouri Department of Conservation discovered a Bur Oak at least 328 years old on the campus of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here.

"Born" on or before 1648, the tree was beginning to grow in the new world just as Baptists were beginning to emerge as an American denomination and during the time that controversial figures such as Roger Williams and John Clarke established the colonies' first Baptist churches and fought for religious liberty.

The 59-foot oak, has been designated an "Official Liberty Tree" in a Bicentennial program sponsored by Missouri conservation officials.

The Liberty Tree program began last November, 1975 as a revival of an early American custom. During the colonies' revolutionary years, trees became an emotional symbol of liberty. The most famous Liberty Tree, a 120-year-old elm, stood in Boston and harbored fiery political meetings under its branches. It was cut down by the British and used for firewood, which stirred the patriots' ire even more.

The image of a tree with the words "Liberty Tree" above its crown and "An Appeal to God" below its trunk adorned the colonial flag flown as a signal for the patriots to come together. In the Missouri program, trees that were living in 1776 and judged by foresters to best represent the original Liberty Tree are designated "Official Liberty Tree."

The discovery of Midwestern's prize tree was accidental. Much of the seminary's 206-acre campus is tree-covered. The administration had asked the state's forestry service to inspect the trees and advise conservation methods. It was during this inspection the tree was discovered. The tree supports an 83-foot crown spread and measures 65.5 inches in diameter.

The Baptist oak is one of the oldest of the 225 Missouri trees selected as Official Liberty Trees. One Missouri forester called the oak "a significant tree and contribution to the urban forest."

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BAPTIST PRESS

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July 26, 1976

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'Get Church & Statesmanship Together More,' Says Dunn

NASHVILLE (BP)--Former Tennessee Governor Winfield Dunn told a group of Baptist employees here that separation of church and state, a long standing tradition of Baptists, "does not mean that churches and statesmen should be separate.

"In fact, we had better find a way to get the two together more," Dunn, who was raised a Baptist, told participants in a chapel service hosted by the Southern Baptist Foundation at the Southern Baptist Convention Building here.

This is especially true, the former Republican governor said, with reports of what is "happening in Washington," an indirect reference to recent accounts of corruption and sex scandals in national government.

"Religion and politics mix inevitably in life . . . God's love carries a mandate to give ourselves by caring for and loving others." But people today are "apathetic . . . They are less inclined to get involved," continued Dunn, an active Methodist layman.

One reason is that the peoples' "confidence" in government has fallen way down, he added. "We have a 14 percent confidence factor concerning Americans for their political leaders.

"When a politician lies to the people . . . it can't help but burden and disappoint you. This kind of disillusioning activity, however, is not reserved for Washington-- it goes on everywhere. We know we have to do some changing."

The only way to change, Dunn said, is for concerned committed followers of Jesus Christ and others to "be in the right places, talking to the right people. People are the body of the church, which is an extension into the community . . . We really solve problems of life from the bottom up--in the local neighborhood and community.

"I hope preachers will tell their members to get out and speak up for what they believe-- not who to vote for. Give them the basic guidelines--It's got to be done."

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Charismatic Southern
Baptists Convene in Dallas

Baptist Press
7/26/76

By Helen Parmley

DALLAS (BP)--A charismatic pastor said here it is impossible to say how many neo-pentecostals there are in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the nations largest Protestant denomination.

But more than 2,000 of them from at least 15 states attended an unprecedented three-day gathering in Dallas, July 21-24, at the Statler Hilton Hotel.

"This movement is growing so rapidly and is so widespread in Baptist circles, there is no way of knowing how many are in the fellowship," said Howard Conatser, pastor of the 5,000-member Beverly Hills Baptist Church which last year was ousted from the Dallas Baptist Association because of its charismatic ministry.

A recent issue of the SBC publication "Home Missions" estimates that, according to a survey, some 100 SBC churches with memberships totaling about 10,000 have charismatic ministries.

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Conatser, however, maintains there are probably that many more in "underground" prayer fellowships in non-charismatic churches.

Conatser and four other Baptist pastors from across the country held a news conference before the opening of what they billed as the "first national Southern Baptist Charismatic Conference."

The gathering in Dallas had no official sanction or endorsement by the Southern Baptist Convention or its agencies or of any state Baptist convention or association.

Charismatics embrace a "baptism in the Holy Spirit" through which "gifts" (or charismata) such as healing, miracles, prophecy and speaking in tongues are revealed to them as operative practices in the contemporary world.

The charismatic movement has surfaced in most denominations in recent years. Some accept it as a "breath of fresh air," while others are attempting "to live with it."

Its emergence in the SBC has resulted in doubt, fear, arrogance and name calling on both sides of the issue, mainly at the congregational and associational levels. Most Southern Baptists apparently either are opposed to it or indifferent to it, however.

Several local Baptist associations of churches and congregations have been disrupted by it. Reports have indicated that at least four associations have ousted at least six churches in at least four states during the past year--and another association labeled the charismatic movement as being "of the devil." Such actions did not escalate to the state or national SBC levels.

Ousting of churches by associations or even state conventions does not bar congregations from remaining in the SBC, which has refused to either condone or condemn the practice at annual national conventions.

So, most of the congregations remained Southern Baptist, a situation which in most cases has been tantamount to the story of the Ugly Duckling. They belong, but for all practical purposes, they are ignored.

Hungry for that good old Baptist fellowship that is so traditional in the denomination, the charismatics organized the unofficial "Southern Baptist Charismatic Conference" at the Statler Hilton. Reportedly it had been preceded by three "regional" gatherings between late 1974 and late 1975.

"We felt a need to bring Spirit-filled Baptists together for fellowship, inspiration and encouragement," five pastors said at the news conference. Besides Conatser, they are J. Samuel Phillips, Bay View Heights Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala.; Roy Roy C. Lamberth, Trinity Baptist Church, Louisville; Don LeMaster, West Lauderdale Baptist Church, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; and Julian Brandon, Claiborne Baptist Church, West Monroe, La.

"Most of my Christian experience has been as a Baptist," Phillips said, "and I want to remain a Southern Baptist. But, when we 'come out' and declare our charismatic ministries, doors (in the SBC) are closed. We are taken off committees and are no longer included in the politics and organizational concerns of the convention."

"Baptists are great for fellowship. I miss that. I feel a need for fellowship, encouragement and inspiration with others. So I am delighted I can share an open ministry with others at this gathering."

Out of the denominational "closets," and into a fellowship of like believers, the Baptists really turned it on. There was much embracing, touching, smiling and greetings of "Praise the Lord."

A large orchestra and choir from Beverly Hills Church provided an almost swinging beat for such songs as "Jesus Saves," "Oh, How I Love Jesus" and "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms."

Black, white and brown, young and old, families and singles, the congregation from California to Florida and from Texas and Louisiana to Michigan filled the Grand Ballroom with an hour long session of songs.

A pretty, young girl, who had displayed her talents in a nearby discotheque until she "was saved and filled with the Spirit," drew a standing ovation and a series of "Praise the Lord" and "Jesus Saves" outbursts when she sang "A Little Talk With Jesus."

Prayers, testimonies and the messages delivered at each of the three-hour services were frequently punctuated with spontaneous outcries of "Amen, Jesus" and "Hallelujah" from the obviously delighted-to-be-here Baptists.

One excited pastor told me, "I don't know if I'll have a church when I get back to Georgia, but I don't care anymore. I have Jesus and I have found a lot of friends who share my faith. Praise the Lord."

Baptists who for so long had felt ostracized from faith fellowship had themselves a time in Dallas.

They got together. They were "one in the Spirit." They emerged from "underground" and had their day. The question now is if the momentum and enthusiasm and togetherness that often prevails when a new door opens will continue to flourish when those who pass through are confronted by the overwhelming test of fellowship in the Baptist tradition.

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Helen Parmley is religion editor of the Dallas Morning News.