

Jerry Falwell Dies at 73

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The Rev. Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority, died May 15 shortly after he was found unconscious in his Liberty University office, the Associated Press (AP) reported. He was 73. Ron Godwin, executive vice-president of the Lynchburg, college, said Falwell had a history of heart problems, but he was unsure what caused the minister to collapse. Founder and senior pastor of 22,000-member Thomas Road Baptist Church, Falwell became a prominent voice for the Christian conservative community after abortion was legalized in 1973. He founded the Moral Majority in 1979 and credited the organization with helping to put Ronald Reagan into office in 1980. He stepped down as its leader in 1987 but continued to oppose abortion, gay marriage and bans on school prayer. "Jerry has been a tower of strength on many of the moral issues which have confronted our nation," said Christian Broadcasting Network founder Pat Robertson, who launched the Christian Coalition of America in 1988. "Jerry's courage and strength of convictions will be sadly missed in this time of increasing moral relativism." Falwell made careful plans to transition his leadership to his two sons, Jerry Falwell, Jr., currently vice chancellor of Liberty University, and Jonathan Falwell, the executive pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church. In addition to his two sons, Falwell is survived by his wife of 49 years, Macel, and his daughter.