

Oral Roberts Praises ORU Leaders

Healing evangelist Oral Roberts was in Tulsa, Okla., last weekend to publicly bless incoming president Mark Rutland and the changes at Oral Roberts University.

✖ **Feb. 18, 2009** – Veteran healing-evangelist Oral Roberts said the university he founded is headed in the right direction under the leadership of board chair Mart Green and his family, whose \$70 million gift last year helped save the school from near-financial ruin.

During his first visit to Oral Roberts University since the 2007 financial scandal that led to his son's resignation as president, Roberts said he has great confidence in the family of Oklahoma City-based entrepreneurs whose contribution helped relieve the school of a \$55 million debt.

"It was if we'd known each other all our lives," Roberts said in an interview Saturday with *Charisma* and the *Tulsa World*. "They picked it up and never missed a thing. And I am so happy that they have done it."

"The thing that moved me [about the Greens] was their stand, what they believed," he added. "I inquired of that very diligently and found we're on the same road, traveling the same path. And I felt relieved. I felt relaxed."

Roberts was at the Tulsa, Okla., university at the request of Mart Green, who wanted the 91-year-old chancellor to pray a public blessing over incoming ORU president Mark Rutland. In July, Rutland officially assumes his new post after 10 years as president at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla., where enrollment tripled under his leadership.

"The board chose him, but I agreed a thousand percent,"

Roberts said. "He was the only one that filled my mind. [Rutland] had all the talents, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and he could come in here as a new voice with the anointing of God upon him. And he'd have a great opportunity to express his talents and to move this school right on down into a new level."

Roberts was also on hand Saturday for a rededication of ORU's famous prayer tower and its newly renovated prayer room.

Roberts spoke little of the trouble that started about 15 months ago when his son, former president Richard Roberts, resigned amid controversy involving alleged misuse of funds and a lawsuit filed by former ORU faculty.

The Green family, which accumulated its wealth through the national Hobby Lobby store chain, stepped in with a \$70 million donation and added another \$10 million late last month. ORU spent more than \$10 million on campus renovations last year and plans more cosmetic updates this summer.

Despite the changes at ORU, Roberts said the campus still feels like home.

"It's still my family," he said. "I'm the one God chose to build this university. I sat out on that ground and heard His voice, and He told me to build it. And I did it. And then when the Greens came along, I knew that they were the right people. And I've been very pleased with the growth of the school under their leadership."

Roberts said he was unaware of any wrongdoing that his son committed at ORU and said he did not believe the allegations of financial mismanagement were true. He also said he had not pressured Richard Roberts to resign.

"I didn't ask him to do anything," Roberts said. "He resigned on his own."

After more than 60 years in ministry, Roberts said he is most proud of ORU, and he is optimistic about its future.

“God told me to raise [ORU students] up to hear His voice,” he said. “To go where His light is dim, His voice is heard small, [and] His healing power is not known. ... That’s my only hope for the students.”

Roberts remains on the ORU board of trustees and continues to mentor ministers from his California home. He said only time would tell what his legacy would be. “I don’t think I will decide that. I think that my friends will decide that,” he said. “And whatever they decide will be the legacy. I don’t think the last word is in yet.” -**Chad Bonham in Tulsa, Okla.**