

# Pastor marks 60 years at his one and only church

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HICO (BP)—It was 1965, and Carroll Shelby introduced the Mustang GT 350. President Johnson signed Medicare and the Voting Rights Acts into law. And Bob Ray became the pastor of Fairy Baptist Church in Hamilton County, a role he still holds today.

The church will celebrate its pastor's 60th anniversary Aug. 31.

Ray, 84, originally from Lawrence, Kan., credits his wife Rosalind for helping him recognize his call to ministry.



Bob Ray, pictured with his late wife Rosalind, has served Fairy Baptist Church since 1965. (Photo / Ken Camp)

"Rosalind was an absolutely wonderful partner who felt called to be a pastor's wife," he said. "She surrendered to the call before I did, and she

used to get a little aggravated with me because I didn't see it yet."

Rosalind died last year from pancreatic cancer.

When they agreed on God's call on his life, Bob Ray announced it to First Southern Baptist Church of Lawrence when he was 24.

He and Rosalind soon moved to Fort Worth where he enrolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The young ministry student put his bachelor's degree in business administration to use, finding work as a production control manager at a local manufacturing facility while tending to his seminary studies.

The plant employed several seminary students who made Ray aware of supply preaching opportunities at nearby churches. A classmate recommended the young preacher to a church about 90 miles away that was without a pastor.

"They weren't looking for much, and they didn't get much," Ray said.

Generations of people in the Fairy congregation would disagree.

## **Serving bivocationally before the term was coined**

Ray had no intention of filling the role for 60 years, and serving bivocationally for his entire ministry was certainly not part of the plan.

"I'd never even heard the word," he said. "People talked about part-time pastors, but the term 'bivocational' was not coined until after I started, and people began to realize there is no such thing as 'part-time ministry.'"

God's desire was different than Ray's, however. Churches called with offers

throughout the years, but he and Rosalind never had peace with accepting any of them.

As they prayed about opportunities to serve elsewhere, they came to experience a deep peace and contentment in a call to plant roots in Fairy, an unincorporated community near Hico.

Ray continued to work in manufacturing until making a move to the Baptist General Convention of Texas from 2001 until his retirement at the end of 2007. As the director of BGCT's Bivocational and Small Church Department, he was able to serve pastors like himself.

Having a job he loved and working with people "who needed Jesus really bad" led him to appreciate the opportunity to work in two careers.

"I got to minister a lot in my secular work," he said.

## **Challenges and rewards**

Of course, he also experienced the challenges of working multiple jobs. Managing time and ensuring family is not neglected are the two biggest challenges Ray identifies. He worked hard to learn to manage time well, and he again credits Rosalind for making sure the family did not resent time devoted to ministry.

"The Lord blessed me with Rosalind. I couldn't have had a better partner. All three of our boys are saved. All of our grandchildren know the Lord. And the great-grandchildren old enough to understand the gospel have trusted Jesus," Ray said.

While their community has changed greatly over the last 60 years, Ray and the church have worked tirelessly to reach out.

"People are more isolated now. They shut themselves in," he said.

He and the church have used direct mail, social media, livestreaming and presence in the community to overcome the isolation.

## **Advice for other pastors**

Ray offers two pieces of advice for pastors.

First, he explains that pastors who serve bivocationally must not believe they have to land a fully funded position to be fulfilled in ministry.

“Rejoice where the Lord has put you until he moves you somewhere else,” he said.

Next, he shares a bit of advice he learned years ago about love and leadership.

“Pastors must learn their people by spending time with them. Pastors must love their people,” he said. “Only after they have loved and learned their people will pastors be able to lead their people.”

“If you’re always looking for the next church, you’re never going to fall in love with your people,” he said. “Rosalind and I just fell in love with our folks. If you love them, they’ll let you lead.”

Sixty years in, he says he has no plans to retire, because he likes preaching but loves pastoring.

*William Dooley is a teacher, campus ministry leader and pastor. He is the chairman of the board of directors of the national Bivocational and Small Church Leadership Network.*