

Pastor and activist Ole Anthony dies at 82

by [Bob Smietana](#) in the [May 19, 2021](#) issue



(Courtesy photo)

Ole Anthony, a small-church pastor and activist who spent years investigating the lifestyles of rich and famous televangelists, died April 16 at the age of 82.

Anthony, who was diagnosed with cancer in 2017, was the longtime president of the Dallas-based Trinity Foundation Inc., a nonprofit that helped people experiencing homelessness. He also ran a radio show, held Bible studies, and eventually spent years investigating televangelists.

Anthony came to fame in the early 1990s, after the Trinity Foundation's investigation of televangelist Robert Tilton's direct mail operation was featured on ABC's *Primetime Live* broadcast. The Trinity Foundation claimed Tilton's direct mail operation kept the checks from donors but threw their prayer requests in the trash—a claim the ministry disputed. Anthony also lambasted Tilton as someone who misused religion for profit.

Anthony would spend three decades investigating televangelists and even ended up advising a US Senate committee that looked into the finances of high-profile televangelists. His followers would climb through dumpsters, comb mountains of documents, and interview whistleblowers in a relentless crusade against what Anthony saw as religious fraud.

For a time, the Trinity Foundation also ran *The Door*, a satirical Christian magazine.

Anthony's hard-charging style made enemies, both among the televangelists he hounded and among some of his own followers. A number of former members claimed the Trinity Foundation was a "cult of personality" dominated by Anthony.

The Trinity Foundation's own tribute to Anthony described him as having an "often confrontational and abrasive style" and noted some group members had left because of accusations of "cult-like tactics."

"Most disagreed and remained, however, and the community he founded survived and evolved," the tribute went on to state. —Religion News Service