

Christian Retreat Founder and Worldwide Evangelist Gerald Derstine Dies at 93

Dr. Gerald Derstine, the founder of Christian Retreat and a worldwide evangelistic minister for decades, died Saturday at the age of 93. The Christian Retreat Facebook page said Derstine “transitioned peacefully” to glory:

“Thank you for your fervent prayers on his behalf over the past few weeks,” the Facebook post read. “Please continue to keep his wife, Shirley, and family members in prayer as we adjust to his loss here on earth. He is healed and whole now, eternally with the One he spent a lifetime serving. He has left a legacy that will continue to impact millions worldwide.”

On its website, the organization said Derstine remained active in ministry until his death.

According to , Derstine established Christian Retreat in 1968 on 110 acres in Bradenton, Florida, envisioning a Christian community where year-round conferences could be held.

The organization’s website describes Christian Retreat’s impact on the kingdom:

“Over the past six decades, we have seen multitudes of lives transformed through the global outreaches and apostolic network of Christian Retreat/Gospel Crusade. Leaders have been trained and another generation has stepped forth to carry the torch and proclaim the Gospel message. Our mission remains the same: to teach kingdom of God principles and help Christians learn how to share Christ’s love, joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit. We will work until He comes.”

Derstine began his kingdom work in 1955 as a young Mennonite pastor in northern Minnesota, praying for revival. God answered his prayers with seven days and nights of supernatural happenings, which he chronicled in his testimonial book, *Following The Fire*. The Christian Retreat website reads:

Directed by the Spirit of God to move to Florida, the Derstine family met and teamed up with Henry M. Brunk, a retired businessman who had formed Gospel Crusade, Inc., a non-profit corporation, to do missions work. Their vision was the same: to fulfill the Great Commission ... go into all the world and preach the gospel, winning souls to Christ and bringing healing to those who are hurting.

For many years, they worked together, establishing churches, schools and orphanages at home and abroad. Gerald, his wife, Beulah, and four children traveled in evangelistic ministry throughout the world. In 1965, Derstine founded Strawberry Lake Christian Retreat in Minnesota where the revival had taken place. After 52 years of ministry, that Retreat closed in 2017 and now serves as a rehabilitation center on the White Earth Indian Reservation.

Derstine's son, Phil, a graduate of Oral Roberts University, followed in his father's footsteps and accepted the mantle of leadership, establishing The Family Church at Christian Retreat in 1986 and becoming president of Gospel Crusade Inc. in 1990. He and his wife, Jannette, married 40 years, co-pastor The Family Church at Christian Retreat and its outreaches. {eoa}

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