

# Controversial Pentecostal Bishop Carlton Pearson Dies at 70

Pentecostal Bishop Carlton Pearson, once the pastor of the one of the largest churches in Tulsa, Oklahoma, died at 70 on Sunday, Nov. 19, after a long battle with prostate cancer. He had been under hospice care since early November.

During the 1990s, Pearson's church in Tulsa, Higher Dimensions Church, reached an average attendance of 6,000. In 1994, however, after watching a television program about the "wretched conditions" of people suffering and dying from genocide in Rwanda, and considering the teaching of his church that non-Christians were going to hell, Pearson revealed that he had received an epiphany from God and stated publicly that he doubted the existence of hell as a place of eternal torment.

He said that hell was created on earth by human depravity and behavior.

When he announced his stated belief in universal reconciliation, Pearson began to lose his influence in his ministry as a member of the Joint College of African-American Pentecostal Bishops and was eventually declared a heretic by his peers in 2004.

Charisma News columnist J. Lee Grady recently said that, after watching a video Pearson posted from his hospital bed, "Pearson smiled and told his followers he would see them in heaven."

But Grady wonders if that will be the case.

"I'm glad that I'm not the one to decide that," Grady says.

“But I wouldn’t want to be in this man’s shoes as he steps into eternity.”

Pearson was raised in the Church of God In Christ and attended Oral Roberts University. He was mentored by Oral Roberts himself, and eventually became one of the most recognized preachers in America as he sang with the World Action Singers.

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He began to hold Azusa conferences that attracted thousands to his church every year and his church began to grow. But that’s when the trouble began.

Pearson decided to stand for the Gospel of Inclusion, and eventually declared that Jesus is the Way. He’s just not the only way.

In 2006, he was accepted as a United Church of Christ minister and in September 2008, he held his final services at New Dimensions Worship Center.

Pearson was then named the interim minister of the Christ Universal Temple in Chicago, but left that position in January 2011 and returned to Tulsa in 2014.

His time in ministry was the subject of a Chicago Public Radio Program called “Heretics” in December 2005, and his life story was broadcast on NBC’s Dateline program called “To Hell and Back” on Aug. 13, 2006.

In 2007, CNN broadcast a story about Pearson that covered the changes in his teachings—including the acceptance of LGBTQ people into his church—and the backlash against it. {eo}

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**Shawn A. Akers** *is the online editor at Charisma Media.*