

Remembering Gerald Derstine (1928-2022): Early Figure in Charismatic Renewal

Dr. Gerald Derstine, founder of the Christian Retreat conference sites and former president of Gospel Crusade Inc., died recently at age 93. The ministry announced his passing on Facebook, "Our beloved founder ... transitioned peacefully to glory ... Thank you for your fervent prayers on his behalf over the past few weeks. ... He has left a legacy that will continue to impact millions worldwide."

Derstine was a newlywed in Minnesota when he and his new bride visited a Pentecostal revival in Michigan in 1949. Energized by Pentecostal evangelist T. L. Osborn, he felt a call to ministry, later joining his uncle's Mennonite church in northern Minnesota.

Outpourings of the Holy Spirit and revivals followed, but the charismatic events did not sit well with Mennonite leadership. Derstine was threatened with removal from ministry unless he publicly stated the supernatural manifestations were an act of Satan. The young pastor stood strong in the Holy Spirit and refused, and his ministry blossomed. He would later reconcile with the Mennonite church.

Derstine followed the Holy Spirit's guidance to Bradenton, Florida, popular with the Mennonite community for winter vacation homes. In 1968, he acquired 110 acres in Bradenton and founded the first Christian Retreat charismatic conference site.

In 2020, Derstine donated a large volume of his ministry materials and archives to the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center in Springfield, Missouri. He is survived by his second wife, Shirley; son and daughter-in-law, Pastors Phil and

Jannette Derstine; and other family.