

Earl Paulk's Former Church Sold

The 51-acre campus of an Atlanta-area megachurch that used to be home to one the nation's most influential charismatic congregations has been sold.

The Cathedral at Chapel Hill, founded by the late Earl Paulk Jr., was purchased by Greater Traveler's Rest Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., for \$17.6 million, according to CNL Specialty Real Estate in Orlando, Fla., which brokered the deal that closed on Friday.

The church campus, which had been put on the market in November for \$24.5 million, has seven buildings, including a 6,000-seat main auditorium, large fellowship hall, offices, classrooms and theater.

Matt Messier, broker and principal for CNL, said the Cathedral campus was one of the largest religious facilities available in the United States. "We are happy to have brokered a successful outcome for a property of this size, especially in today's challenging economic climate," he said in a statement.

Paulk, who died in March at age 81, helped popularize charismatic "kingdom now" theology, which teaches that the church, as a manifestation of God's kingdom, must take dominion of every sector of society. At its height in the 1990s, the church drew 10,000 attendees, but in recent years membership had declined to roughly 1,000 after a series of sexual misconduct allegations were made against Paulk.

Several women accused Paulk of coercing them into having affairs with him and another claimed he molested her as a child. In recent years, DNA tests proved Paulk fathered a child with his brother's wife.

That child, D.E. Paulk, now leads the Cathedral, which embraces universalism and affirms the gay lifestyle. Last year, the younger Paulk said the church's evolving mission to be "radically inclusive" lessened its need for space.

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Greater Traveler's Rest, a 6,000-member congregation led by pastor E. Dewey Smith Jr., plans to sell its current facility and will hold its first service in the new sanctuary on Aug. 30.

Correction: The sale closed on Friday, not Monday, as previously reported.