

You're Not Welcome Here

by Michael Miano

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While visiting a local church, Pastor Michael Miano and his family were asked to leave the service because he was deemed to be a false teacher. *Fulfilled!* Magazine interviewed Pastor Michael about the incident. [Note: We will start a conversation about this incident on our Facebook page shortly after this issue is mailed out. We welcome your thoughts and insights.]

<https://www.facebook.com/FCGAD70>

Fulfilled! Magazine: Describe what happened.

Pastor Miano: In September 2022, I took my family to visit another local church, Hope Reformed Baptist. During the service, I was tapped on the shoulder by one of the pastors and he asked if we would all follow him. As I escorted my family from the row in which we were sitting toward the exit I mentioned to the pastor that he knew my wife. They had previously worked together. He appeared confused. As we exited, he began to express that he knew me, he knew my wife, but questioned how we knew each other. We exclaimed that we were married (to be fair, we are newlyweds, and our acquaintance and recent marriage must have passed under his radar). He then proceeded to tell me that due to me being a false teacher, I am not welcome to gather with their congregation or to receive communion. Rather disappointed, I began to usher my family down the steps to the parking lot, at which time the pastor asserted that he was sorry. I responded that he was not sorry, to which he responded that he was not sorry for me, but for my wife.

It should be noted that I have never met this pastor. Despite his remark that he knew me, he seemed to only know of me and what I teach. After further discussion and recent events, I assume that all took place because I teach and preach Full Preterism as truth that demonstrates the power, presence, and purpose of God.

FM: Why were you visiting another church?

Pastor Miano: I personally believe having conversations, hearing perspectives outside of your own, especially pertaining to division, distinction, and denominationalism, in the Christian community, is important. So “Visit Another Church Sunday” was an idea I created to encourage our church to

experience other worship gatherings and to get us out of our own experiential box. Our Blue Point Bible Church Leadership Committee and congregation approved of the concept. Outside of Sundays, I have continued to attend, visit with, and work with other pastors and congregations as often as I can.

Also, I must mention that just recently I had learned of how close in proximity Hope Reformed Baptist Church was to my new residence and I was excited to visit. I have visited and discussed Preterism with other Reformed Baptists in the past. It has seemed mutually edifying. Hope Reformed Baptist would be most in line with the views I have of theology and the Bible, as well as the order of service being most familiar to me. All of this without knowing that my wife, ironically enough, was invited to visit the church by that pastor.

FM: What were you hoping to gain from your visit?

Pastor Miano: Perspective. It's only when we venture outside of our own ways of thinking, our own tribe, etc. that we truly open ourselves to growing in the grace and knowledge of God. At least, in my estimation. Of course, engagement and discussion, even just polite banter is always desired, however not expected. Also, allowing my wife to see other worship services and styles outside of what she has previously experienced.

FM: Had you discussed any doctrinal issues with anyone at Hope Reformed Baptist during your visit?

Pastor Miano: No. During the visit we (my wife, my stepson, and I) simply walked in, received a smile and a bulletin from the greeter, and sat in the pews. We sang the hymns, listened attentively, and were readying for the close of the service. However, in times past, I have had friendly acquaintance, discussion, and Facebook disagreement with one of the current pastors of the church.

FM: Has there been any follow-up between you and the leadership of Hope Reformed?

Pastor Miano: Yes. There were responses to my social media posting about the incident by two of the current pastors. Rather than any kind of apologetic tone, these men have simply asserted and dug in their heels deeper, ostracizing and condemning the Full Preterist view (which they erroneously refer to as 'hyper-preterism'). Even to the extent that they have now begun teaching on YouTube against it.

FM: As a pastor, if someone whom you felt taught heretical doctrine attended your service, how would you handle the situation?

Pastor Miano: I have served in the pulpit at The Blue Point Bible Church for almost a decade, and yes, during that span of time I have had those who I disagree with, even those who proved to be a bit disruptive, attend worship service and/or Bible studies. Only a few times did it become necessary to ask

someone to perhaps allow us to make the time less about them or their ideas and more about our corporate studies, efforts, and discussions. However, in this particular incident I had not said a thing. I can say with assurance that the way New Hope Reformed Baptist Church handled this was not the way anyone in leadership, especially Christian leadership, should have handled such an incident. My assurance is based on conversation with my elders and other congregants at The Blue Point Bible Church.

FM: Is there something we as preterists and, more importantly, as members of the Body of Christ, can learn from this incident?

Pastor Miano: I personally think that is the most important question. I know some had criticized my immediate posting of the incident on Facebook, while others praised it. I was encouraged and inspired by the many who, whether they were Preterist or not, Christian or not, saw the hypocrisy, immaturity, and cultic way in which this was handled by New Hope Reformed Baptist Church. However, I was also burdened to see so many express such hurts and frustrations and anger towards the Church, and while I think we who believe in the efficacy of the Church, which I do, need to consider reform in many areas, I did not and do not want to depreciate the Church, even the local church.

I believe the Christian community, especially the Preterists, as we face such moments of being ostracized in local assemblies, need to consider the importance, value, efficacy, necessary reforms, and healthy expressions of fellowship and gathering as the Church. We should feel invited and united to gather with other brethren in Christ, despite differences in such diversely opinionated areas of theology like eschatology, for opportunities in fellowship and worship. If that cannot happen in certain locales, perhaps we need to work together in encouraging, fostering, and ‘planting’ local assemblies in those areas. In this case, it would not be the Preterists who have been divisive to the Body, but rather the Futurists who seem to welcome diversity in confusion, but not unity with clarity.

FM: Why did you post so quickly on social media?

Pastor Miano: To be a bit transparent in that regard, it was a knee-jerk reaction. I was hurt and utilized my social media to vent. That is not to say that I do not think it was appropriate. Enough is enough. Those outside the Church deserve, maybe even need, to see that those within the Church will mark out hypocrisy when it rears its ugly head. This has happened, ‘behind closed doors’ to those who challenge the status quo, especially Preterists, for too long. Public exposure to issues in the Church is beneficial, just as the proper use of social media is. Also, I might add that I welcomed and continue to welcome conversation with leaders from Hope Reformed Baptist (as I did “tag” them in the post), however, for the sake of intellectual honesty and accountability, I believe public exposure to the conversation was and is necessary.

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