

After ‘Inappropriate Relationship,’ Megachurch Pastor Dino Rizzo Restored to Ministry

Another fallen-then-restored pastor is making news this week.

Dino Rizzo, who took a sabbatical in July 2012 and then resigned from the senior pastorate of his church two months later, is now going back to work for the Association of Related Churches (ARC), working with church planters, church leaders and churches in transition that he co-founded.

Rizzo stepped away from the pulpit at Healing Place Church in Baton Rouge, La., last summer, saying he had not felt like himself spiritually, physically or emotionally for several months. At that time, he also said that his physically exhausted, spiritually depleted state had affected his decision-making, his family life and his ability to lead effectively.

Although it was unclear why Rizzo chose to resign at that time, he did ask for forgiveness from those he disappointed as a pastor. He told the congregation that his wife and three kids were on the path to “healing and hope.”

Greg Surratt, president of ARC, has revealed Rizzo was “involved in the early stages of a brief but inappropriate friendship with another woman.”

Surratt went on to say that Healing Place overseers, including Chris Hodges, Rob Ketterling, John Seibling and Stovall Weems, assumed responsibility to guide the church and the Rizzos to healing and restoration. A comprehensive plan was put in place that included rest, counseling for Dino and his wife, Delynn,

and a “list of other actions” overseers felt would eventually qualify Rizzo to minister again.

“They also felt it was important for him to step down from public ministry for one year, followed by a year of supervised ministry before he would be considered fully restored,” Surratt says. “The list of personal benchmarks that Dino was asked to fulfill was 31 items long, and over the past year, he and Delynn have accomplished each one of them.”

After much prayer, Surratt continues, the Rizzos felt it was in the best interest of Healing Place Church to move on and let someone else lead the church they planted more than 20 years ago. In May 2013, the overseers, along with the church trustees and elders, installed Mike Haman as the new senior pastor. Haman was already serving in a senior role and has been a spiritual son to Rizzo for many years.

Surratt says the Rizzos will be moving to Birmingham, Ala., for the next year of supervised ministry. Dino Rizzo will be serving on staff at Church of the Highlands for one year and also serving part-time for the ARC, assisting the team in providing pastoral care for the hundreds of church planters that have planted through the ARC.

“In July, the ARC board of directors met for our annual board meeting and—based on the recommendation of the overseers—formally installed Dino back into this season of ministry,” Surratt says. “We laid hands on him and released him to fulfill the call of God on his life again. We are looking forward to the value he will bring to ARC, providing care and relationship to fellow pastors as we move forward together in our goal of seeing life-giving churches planted and nourished in every community.”

Sam Hinn, the brother of Benny Hinn, is also being re-ordained this week.