

Mother Claims She Was Kicked Out of Steven Furtick's Church Sanctuary for Breastfeeding

A mother says she was kicked out of Elevation Church's sanctuary while breastfeeding with a cover on. Now, other mothers around the country are planning a "nurse-in" at Steven Furtick's church.

Amanda Zilliken says she was nursing her 4-month-old daughter with a cover during the sermon when a volunteer asked her to leave the sanctuary and go to the restroom to finish.

"She brought me to a family bathroom, I guess it's a mother's restroom. I was humiliated. It's not OK to shame someone for breastfeeding," Zilliken says. "That was wrong to take me from hearing the word of God to remove me to a restroom."

Elevation Church says they do not have a nursing mothers' policy.

"We do not have a policy that nursing mothers can't be in the sanctuary. A volunteer had a conversation and felt both parties arrived at the same conclusion to exit mutually. We are sorry that this in any way offended anyone. We welcome everyone and anyone to attend Elevation church," according to a statement given to the *Charlotte Observer*. "We have several designated areas for nursing moms at Ballantyne specifically—one private to allow pumping and it's close to the auditorium for convenience and the other in the actual baby area with a TV to allow mothers to still be part of the worship experience."

Zilliken says she's unsure if she will return to one of the

fastest-growing churches in the nation.

"As much as I love hearing the word of God from Pastor Steven ... I'm not sure at this time if I'll feel comfortable going back because of the way this was handled," Zilliken says.

To protest, other mothers have planned a "Nurse-In" during Elevation Ballantyne's 11 a.m. service on Aug. 20.

According to the Facebook event, 18 plan to attend, and 90 are interested.

One person posted, "This might be first time I go to church in about a decade."

Another says: "Love the idea of a nurse in, I am pregnant with twins so wont be able to nurse but I sur[e]ly will be going to support. I do love this church and will continue to go to it, and I intend to breast feed [sic] when my babies are here . I am glad this happened to raise awareness and maybe now it wont happen again. Feel bad for the mama who had to go thru this. I hope paster [sic] Steven comments on this and does right by breastfeeding mamas."

Zilliken says the head of security at the campus did apologize to her.

On the church's Facebook page, multiple people left reviews commenting on the situation.

"I attend Elevation Roanoke. My wife has nursed and we have witnessed multiple mothers nursing during the experience and never been an issue. Is it possible, theoretically speaking, could it be (as crazy as this may sound), that this could have been an isolated incident and not church protocol sent from the top? No one wants to be judged but our pastor and entire congregation are being judged cause of one incident? How is that fair? People threatening to sue and boycott but do we know the whole story and was this a one time deal that maybe

just maybe an usher or volunteer made a mistake. Is that crazy to think that someone in a church filled with imperfect people serving a perfect God may have just made a mistake? Let's analyze before jumping to conclusions. I'm sorry for that mother that experienced that and I'm sure it will be made right. But please don't let this deter anyone from the move of God going on at Elevation Church under Pastor Furtick. We love you all! God bless! Will be praying for our church and pastor and especially for the mother that went through this!" one person shared.