

Ted Haggard Elected President of NAE

The pastor of an independent charismatic church is enthusiastic about leading one of the largest evangelical groups

During its 61st annual convention in March, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) elected independent charismatic pastor Ted Haggard as its third full-time president. Made up of 43,000 congregations from 50 member denominations and comprising 27 million constituents, the NAE is among the largest bodies of evangelical Christians in the United States.

Haggard will continue leading his 9,000-member New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., but will network with NAE headquarters in Washington, D.C. He said he wants to see the NAE develop a louder voice in the public arena, becoming a proactive participant in the cultural "exchange of ideas."

"I am super optimistic about the potential that exists within the NAE," Haggard said. "Evangelicals in America are between 40 million and 50 million. ... We're getting things set up to be a resource should the major media outlets call to find out the evangelical view."

High on Haggard's priority list is responding to questions raised by the war in Iraq, as well as addressing partial-birth abortion.

Describing himself as a "Spirit-filled evangelical" because of his Southern Baptist roots, Haggard is the first NAE president

who heads an independent charismatic congregation, though past-president Don Argue is affiliated with the Assemblies of God and immediate past-president Kevin Mannoia considered himself charismatic.

NAE chairman Bill Hamel, president of the Evangelical Free Church of America, said he “sensed no tension” over Haggard’s charismatic theology, and described Haggard as “a proven leader.”

“Ted has a positive, proactive desire to see evangelicals working together to reach the world for Christ,” said Hamel, who described Haggard as a friend. “Ted crosses denominational and theological lines very easily.”

Haggard recently founded the World Prayer Team (), an Internet-based, round-the-clock effort to link intercessors, and oversees the 200-member Association of Life-Giving Churches. Well-known for his teaching on church growth, Haggard has won the respect of ministers across denominational and racial lines.

“Ted Haggard has distinguished himself not only in the evangelical circles, but across the church world as a leader, a man of prayer, a man of vision, a man of passion, and one who can motivate people to become involved in the kingdom of God,” said Assemblies of God General Superintendent Thomas Trask.

Haggard plans to begin an aggressive recruitment campaign to increase NAE membership, hoping to draw large independent churches that are not affiliated with either the theologically liberal National Council of Churches or the more conservative

NAE. Haggard said the essential ties that bind all evangelicals are the beliefs that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God, that Jesus is the Savior of the world and the only Son of God, and that in order to be saved a person must be born again. "All people with a conservative theological view should be part of the NAE," he said.

Evangelical leaders say NAE is poised for growth. "It has been obvious from our initial meeting that Ted is bringing to this responsibility a commitment and dedication that will continue the growth and strengthening of NAE," said Commissioner W. Todd Bassett, national commander of The Salvation Army.

"Ted Haggard will lead the National Association of Evangelicals into a new era of evangelical growth," said Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. "The NAE has a vital role in communicating the cause of Christ through American Christians, and Ted will be a great spokesperson for this cause. My prayer is that key leaders will support him as he continues to lead many to help fulfill the Great Commission," Bright added.

At its March meeting, the NAE partnered with Mission America Coalition to advance evangelistic efforts within member churches and denominations. With its growing bank of resources, including the World Prayer Team and World Relief, the NAE's humanitarian assistance arm, the NAE can mobilize millions of Christians around an issue within a day, Haggard noted.

Haggard believes this is one of the greatest generations in Christian history, second only to the first-century church. He says there are more born-again pastors and government leaders than ever before, more Christian media and more Bibles being

distributed worldwide.

“We’re stronger than we’ve ever been,” he said. “This is the generation of evangelism opportunity.”

Adrienne S. Gaines