

Disgraced pastor Ted Haggard and wife speak at popular Charlotte church

Elevation pastor Steven Furtick says homosexuality is sin

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

CHARLOTTE — Once revered as the leader of the national evangelical movement, former Colorado Springs, Colo. pastor Ted Haggard and wife Gayle appeared on stage with Elevation Church pastor Steven Furtick on April 26. The appearance on the campus of the Matthews, N.C., Providence High School — videotaped and broadcast at the church's several other locations and worship times — marks the first time the wildly popular church has publicly dealt with the issue of homosexuality.

Young pastor Steven Furtick said on his blog that Haggard's appearance would be a chance for "the story of the deception of sin and the forgiveness of God [to] speak for itself" and to "serve as a salient reminder of the devastating results of disobedience, and hopefully, the beginning of a personal healing process for many hurting people."

After years of publicly chastening LGBT people as pastor of New Life Church, Haggard became the subject of serious allegations

from male prostitute Mike Jones in November 2006. Jones claimed Haggard had paid him for sex several times over a three year period. Jones also said he had helped Haggard buy crystal meth.

Haggard, who was also president of the National Association of Evangelicals at the time, later admitted to the allegations, resigned from his position with his church and the association and entered a "restoration" process guided by several evangelical pastors across the country.

Furtick's invitation for the Haggards to speak at the church captivated the Charlotte community and sparked conversations about the issue of homosexuality and the church.

Before introducing the couple, Furtick addressed his congregation and spoke on the reasons for bringing the couple to Charlotte, warning against condemnation.

"If you came here today looking for a condemnation of a person or a

group of people, you are going to be disappointed," he

said. "For far too long the Church of Jesus has

been known for what we are against rather than what we are for. We want to be known as a church that's known for what we're for, and what we're for is the redemption of all people and people who are far from God being



Elevation
CHURCH



Elevation Church pastor Steven Furtick

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brought here to Jesus through the Gospel."

At the same time, Furtick also said his church would stand up for truth and not take a "soft stance on the issue of sin," adding that the church believes all sex outside of marriage is sinful. Furtick clumped "homosexual acts" with sins such as adultery and drunkenness.

Furtick told the packed auditorium, "I

want you to know we are a church full of truth, which means that if you have come here today wanting me to condone any particular lifestyle that you choose to live, you'll be disappointed as well."

On a church website made to answer frequently asked questions about the Haggards'

see **Haggard on 17**

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