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Haggard's escort

In a gay press exclusive, Mike Jones, a male escort from Denver, tells *The Advocate* he revealed his "sexual business relationship" with evangelical leader Ted Haggard to expose the hypocrisy in Haggard's support for a proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. But he says he doesn't wish the prominent pastor, who resigned on November 2, any ill will.

By John Ireland

Mike Jones, a male escort from Denver, says he revealed his "sexual business relationship" with evangelical leader Ted Haggard (pictured) to expose the hypocrisy in Haggard's support for a proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. But he says he doesn't wish the prominent pastor any ill will.

Haggard, a married father of five and a close personal advisor to President Bush, resigned his post as president of the 30-million member National Association of Evangelicals on November 2 and has taken a leave from his job as pastor of the 14,000-member New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colo. He has since admitted to some "indiscretions," including going to Jones for a massage and later purchasing crystal meth from him, but has denied a sexual relationship. Haggard put himself on leave from his church "to allow a panel of four senior pastors, 'wise ones,' and spiritual men to oversee the circumstances," his attorney, Martin Nussbaum, told *The Advocate*.

Jones alleges Haggard has been paying for sex and doing drugs with him for the last three years. He spoke with *The Advocate* about his contact with Haggard, the first time he learned of Haggard's real identity, and why he came forward.

Why now, just days before the midterm election?

I really agonized over it for quite a while and finally decided I needed to say something. People have accused me of trying to get money out of [Haggard]. I will tell you that if I wanted to get money out of him, I could have blackmailed him. I chose not to do that, but to do this on principle, for the gay community. We have two initiatives coming up on [the Colorado] ballot, one to amend the constitution [to ban same-sex marriage] and one for domestic-partnership rights. People have accused me of being a puppet, but I have had no contact with any political organization whatsoever on this. I just did it myself.

Did the scandal surrounding former congressman Mark Foley influence your decision?

No.

When did you first meet Ted Haggard?

Roughly three years ago. I never asked him how he found my number, but I guess it was from a Web site or a newspaper somewhere, because I was advertising at the time as a male escort. When I answered the phone, he indicated he was visiting from Kansas City and that his name was Art. For the first year, he called from a blocked number, then mostly from pay phones from the Colorado Springs area.

When did you first realize who he was?

In the spring of 2006. I was lying on the couch, relaxing, watching the History Channel—a show on the DaVinci Code and the antichrist. All of a sudden, his face came up. They were interviewing him. It was Art. I didn't get his name, so in my mind I was thinking, I'm going to order a copy of this show, just so I can see who this guy is. To me it was a coincidence. The very next morning at 5 a.m., I was at the gym working out on the treadmill. Somebody the night before had turned the TV to the religious channel and there he was. When I got home and looked him up on the computer, I was like, "Ted Haggard...oh, crap...this guy's huge."

What happened next?

The Federal Marriage Amendment was coming up in the [U.S.] Senate and I e-mailed [New Life Church] to find out what

their stance was. Pastor Joseph Winger replied to my e-mail: "We do think that the Federal Marriage Amendment as endorsed by President Bush is a positive step for our nation. Regarding our views on homosexuality, we believe the Bible promotes marriage as a one man, one woman relationship." That pissed me off. Then I looked a little closer at some of Haggard's writings. He was preaching against gay marriage, that our lifestyle "is not what God wants." I started stewing over it.

When was the last time you saw him?

August 7 or 8. I had seen him two or three times after I knew who he was. It was weird. I was really contemplating telling him, "Hey, I know who you are." I didn't. I never brought it up to him. And of course, he never offered. He was not emotional at all. He'd pop on over, we'd [have sex]. It was pretty bland. He was never here more than an hour. The only thing he divulged to me at one time was that he was married. He did not seem nervous to me at all.

When did drugs come into the picture?

About two years ago he asked, "Hey, Mike, what do you know about meth? I don't do it personally, but I know people who do." I told him that some people think it enhances their sexual experience. He asked if I could help him get some. I located someone he could connect with. After that, he got it on his own. The last time he saw me, he was trying to get some and couldn't, which resulted in him sending me money though the mail in August, postmarked Colorado Springs. He wrote "Art" on the corner of the envelope. I just read that his middle name is Arthur.

As a Christian, have you struggled with your own homosexuality?

I'm not ashamed of it. I've never been one to wear a flag on the bumper of my car or on my forehead. I don't go around advertising that I am gay, but I am not ashamed of it. I would stand up and voice my opinion. It's interesting. I'm pretty well built. Generally, people don't mess with me when they see my body. If I come out and say, "I'm gay and I don't appreciate those comments," I usually get an apology. I'm very manly. People think that we're all nelly or in drag. I'm just here to say, "I happen to be gay and I could kick your ass."

Do you think this will have a widespread impact on the nation?

I don't know where this is going to end. We're all sinners, in some way. Since we're all really the same, don't try to prevent other people from having an enjoyable life. Let other people have a chance to get married, have a family of some type, whether it's adoption or whatever...and have a home and enjoy their love for their partner. If you're going to be up there as an example, you have to lead by example, and I think Haggard failed that.

What are your hopes, if any, for Ted Haggard?

You know, I wish him peace. I wish him happiness. I hope whatever happens with this that he's able to continue on in whatever function in the church that he wants to. I do not wish him ill. I'm sorry that his wife and kids are going to have to suffer through this; I feel terrible about that. But I never contacted him. He contacted me. So, he initiated it.

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