

Walter Kim to lead the National Association of Evangelicals

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [November 20, 2019](#) issue



(Photo courtesy of Park Street Church)

Scholar and minister Walter Kim, an expert on the theology of race, has been chosen as the next president of the National Association of Evangelicals.

Kim is a pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, Virginia. He has served on the board of the group, an umbrella organization of 40 evangelical Christian denominations, since 2013.

“As a proven pastor, scholar and thought leader, Walter brings an incredible combination of skills to lead the National Association of Evangelicals into the next decade,” said Roy Taylor, chair of NAE’s board of directors, in an announcement October 17 of Kim’s election.

“His ability to think critically and engage charitably has garnered respect and enthusiasm among our leaders as we consider the future of the NAE and evangelicalism in America and throughout the world.”

Kim, an Asian American who is a minister of both the Presbyterian Church in America and the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, will succeed Leith Anderson, NAE’s president since 2006, who announced last year he planned to retire at the end of 2019.

In an interview, Anderson told Religion News Service he “wholeheartedly” supports Kim and said his successor’s wide range of expertise is fitting for the organization.

“His father was a physician and he grew up in Appalachia as the only minority person in his school,” Anderson said of Kim, who went on to study at Northwestern University, Regent College in Canada, and Harvard University.

Before moving to Charlottesville in 2017, shortly after the city faced deadly violence amid a white nationalist rally, Kim was lead minister at [Park Street Church](#), a Boston congregation influential in founding the NAE.

Board member Johnnie Moore, a commissioner on the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, welcomed Kim’s election.

“Dr. Kim is a respected and thoughtful Christian leader who defies evangelical stereotype and I look forward to working alongside of him as he leads our great association at a time of exponential growth in the global, evangelical movement,” Moore said.

The NAE board also announced the election of John Jenkins, the African American senior pastor of Maryland’s First Baptist Church of Glenarden, as its chair, and Jo Anne Lyon, general superintendent emerita of the Wesleyan Church, as its vice chair. Jenkins and Lyon are expected to start their new roles on March 5.

The diversity of the new hires “is a reflection of much of evangelicalism in America, which is important for people to understand,” said Anderson of the election of the trio who will lead the NAE in the new year. “And the growing edge of evangelicalism is significantly in minority communities and churches.”

Kim, 51, will continue his Charlottesville pastorate after he begins work as NAE president on January 1. Anderson, former pastor of a Minneapolis area church, also

maintained his role as a senior pastor during his presidential term until he [retired](#) from his Eden Prairie, Minnesota, megachurch at the end of 2011.

In the NAE announcement, Kim said he was “humbled” by his election to lead the association of more than 45,000 churches.

“We have before us the compelling call of gospel witness and work, and it will be an honor to lead this organization,” he said. —Religion News Service