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ALPHARETTA, Ga. (ABP)—In a unanimous vote March 21, trustees of the [North American Mission Board](#) elected Geoff Hammond president of the Southern Baptist Convention's stateside mission body.

Hammond, 49, will start full-time work for NAMB May 22. Hammond is currently senior associate director of the [Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia](#). Trustees recommended him for the new position March 1, after a nine-month search to replace disgraced president Bob Reccord.

Geoff
Hammond

Hammond was born in Nigeria to parents working for the SBC's International Mission Board. He graduated from Spurgeon's Seminary in London and received a doctorate from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

In a media call, Hammond said he planned to use his experience as an international missionary in his new position at the North American board, which directs domestic outreach efforts for the 16-million-member SBC.

“The fruits of IMB missionary work” have come back to the United States, he said.

“I’ve always believed that there could be closer relationships between NAMB” and the International Mission Board,” he said. “There are so many things that IMB missionaries have discovered overseas that we could use here as we try to reach ethnic groups and unreached people groups.”

For Hammond, that work includes groups in western and northern states like Montana and North Dakota. He said he faces a “steep learning curve” when it comes to learning about church-starting in the West, but “I have a heart to work with those folks and reach out to them,” he said.

Other challenges, not the least of which involves joining an organization that faced a tumultuous year, include “understanding the huge potential we have with our partners to multiply our ministry.” The mission board should encourage lay people to pray for missionaries and remain active in the life of the organization, he said.

“I hope that having sat on the other side of the table is always something I remember,” he said. “I think the thing that every state convention has is a different context, a different way of working. I want to remember that. I want to remember that all state conventions are different.”

Hammond will face scrutiny as the replacement for Reccord, who [resigned](#) in April 2006 after allegations of financial mismanagement, conflicts of interest and autocratic leadership. Later that year, trustees [instituted policies](#) on honorariums and solicitation of contracting bids. And since some of Reccord’s personal business ventures were considered in direct competition to NAMB interests, trustees issued stricter protections of

intellectual property.

A “whistleblower” policy was also implemented to help alleviate “a culture of fear” that prevented employees from questioning irregularities in the organization, according to previous trustee statements.

Greg Faulls, search committee chairman, said the board instituted new policies to restore trust and protect the new president and trustee board.

“The policies I think only made the agency look more attractive to a potential executive because what we were doing was creating an atmosphere where it was going to be easier to trust and create a stronger foundation of trust,” he said.

NAMB chairman Bill Curtis said one of the board’s top priorities was—necessarily—to choose a president with proven integrity. The prolonged search to find a candidate who fit the bill, he said, made the organization stronger.

“I think the spirit of our meetings is very indicative of the health of our board,” Curtis said. “No one would certainly deny the fact that we’ve been through a very challenging year as an agency. We’ve had the opportunity to spend some time refocusing on vision and clarifying the role of the North American Mission Board. And through this year ... God has really grown the trustees together in an amazing way.”

Southern Baptists should have confidence in the commitment the board has to follow Hammond, Curtis said.

Hammond, who called integrity one of the “greatest things a Christian disciple can have,” said he plans to lead with openness and accountability.

“I seek to understand before I know. That’s going to be an important part of how I lead,” he said. He said he planned to meet with NAMB’s interim

vice presidents later that day to discuss plans for the new administration.

A former pastor, seminary professor, church-planting strategist, and missionary to Brazil, Hammond held his position at the conservative Virginia state convention for five years.

He and his wife, Deborah, have two sons.

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