

NAMB trustees name acting interim president

August 12, 2009



Longtime NAMB
staff member
Richard Harris
was named acting
interim president
Aug. 12.

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (ABP) — North American Mission Board trustees on Aug. 12 named Richard Harris, the organization's senior strategist for missions advancement, as acting interim president after the group's second president resigned — much as his predecessor did.

[Harris](#), a long-time staff member of the Southern Baptist Convention agency [formed](#) in a major denominational restructuring in 1997, takes over for Geoff Hammond. Hammond resigned Aug. 11 after a seven-hour board of trustee meeting, held in executive session at the agency's suburban Atlanta headquarters.

Board chairman Tim Patterson, pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla., said even though there has been much public speculation

about the reasons for the called trustee meeting in recent days, they involved personnel matters and would remain confidential.

Two weeks earlier a trustee leaked an e-mail reporting concerns among the board's officers about Hammond's leadership.

Trustees hoped [hiring](#) Hammond, a former missionary, in May 2007 would move the agency forward after his predecessor, Bob Reccord, resigned amid allegations of mismanagement the year before.

Critics said Hammond lacked the management skills to effectively run an organization as large as NAMB, which oversees more than 5,600 missionaries in the United States and Canada.

The Tennessean newspaper in Nashville recently [quoted](#) one trustee concerned about Hammond's leadership, particularly that he reportedly hired friends instead of qualified persons for key positions. Three of Hammond's closest associates resigned with him. Another trustee told the newspaper that board members tried to help Hammond adjust to his new role, but that it wasn't working.



Critics say Geoff Hammond, who resigned as NAMB president Aug. 11, lacked the leadership skills for an agency so large.

The e-mail circulated prior to the trustee meeting described staff morale at NAMB as being at an all-time low.

One staff member who spoke to Associated Baptist Press on condition of anonymity said he didn't sense low morale in his department and most of the people he talked to Aug. 12 were surprised and saddened but confident in trustee leadership and optimistic about the future of NAMB.

Another staffer said he believed there was a morale problem, and most people he knows would probably feel relieved that tensions affecting their work were being addressed. He said he knew of some people who would have taken other jobs were it not for the poor economy, in which they had to worry about being unable to sell homes in the Atlanta area after they moved.

Hammond did not respond to an e-mail request for comment.

-Bob Allen is senior writer for Associated Baptist Press.

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