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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Former chairman recommended for
new SBC Executive Committee post

Baptist Press
9/8/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--David E. Hankins will be recommended for a new position, vice president for convention policy, at the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee when it meets Sept. 18-20, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer.

Hankins, 45, served eight years on the Executive Committee, including two as chairman, and for the past 10 years has been pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles, La.

Chapman will recommend the new executive position, in part to provide staff leadership necessary for developing and implementing the "Covenant for a New Century" transition plan for the SBC. The recommendations of the Program and Structure Study Committee were approved by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in Atlanta last June and will significantly alter the structure of the SBC.

Chapman said the management of orderly change within the convention, including changes in governing documents such as constitutions, bylaws, charters and the SBC Organizational Manual, will create heavier workloads than the present staff of the Executive Committee can manage.

"Providing adequate staff to do well the work that is assigned to the committee is good stewardship," Chapman said.

The new vice president also will provide staff leadership to the bylaws workgroup of the Executive Committee, coordinate the development and implementation of a coordinated denominational planning process for the 21st century and provide staff assistance to assigned standing and special committees of the SBC and Executive Committee. In addition, the vice president will review governing documents of the SBC, its Executive Committee, boards, commissions and institutions to determine when changes should be considered.

"I believe God has prepared David Hankins spiritually and intellectually for this key position," Chapman said. "He can be a tremendous asset in helping the Executive Committee better serve the SBC and its 40,000 churches. I have great confidence in his abilities and, if God wills his election and acceptance, welcome him gladly to the Executive Committee family."

Chapman's recommendation comes with the unanimous approval of the Executive Committee's officers as well.

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdal, Ark., and chairman of the Executive Committee said: "With all of the added work that will be placed on this committee to implement the plan of restructuring, this additional position is necessary.

"I am very excited about the recommendation of Dr. David Hankins. When David served as chairman of the Executive Committee, he did a splendid job," Floyd said. "His spirituality, intelligence and leadership gifts will equip him to serve in a superior manner in this position."

James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Snellville, Ga., and vice chairman of the committee, said: "This position is strategic and vital as Southern Baptists anticipate implementation of the 'Covenant for a New Century.' Beyond that, this role will fill a key function in the ongoing day-to-day operation of the Executive Committee as it relates to the various entities of the convention. David Hankins is admirably suited to and qualified for this position. He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience with him."

John Wallace, a layman from Morristown, Tenn., and chairman of the program and budget subcommittee of the Executive Committee, said: "During the interview with Dr. and Mrs. Hankins, I was impressed with David's knowledge about the workings of the SBC and his very apparent capability to fulfill the duties which will be assigned to him. Also, I was extremely impressed with his wife, Patty. In response to a question, she indicated that she had asked God to give her a verse of assurance about the possible transition, and he had given her, 'Where thou goest, I will go.' I believe the Hankins team will make Southern Baptists proud."

Born in California, Hankins was raised in Texas where he earned a B.A. degree from Dallas Baptist University and the M.Div. and Ph.D. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

Hankins' pastorates include Grove Temple Baptist Church, Dallas; Oak Crest Baptist Church, Dallas; First Baptist Church, Commerce, Texas; and beginning in March 1985, Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles, La. Active in denominational life, Hankins has been an officer of the SBC Pastors' Conference, chairman of the SBC Resolutions Committee, member of SBC Committee on Nominations and is currently president of the Pastors' Conference of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

Hankins and his wife, the former Patricia Ann Thorpe, have three sons: Andy, 25; Eric, 23; and Adam, 21.

The recommendation to employ Hankins will be presented by Chapman to the Executive Committee's administrative subcommittee and, if approved, to the full Executive Committee during its Nashville meeting.

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8,000 guests! Are you
out of your mind?

By Karen Edwards

Baptist Press
9/8/85

MINNEAPOLIS (BP)--What do you do when you find out you are having guests? You plan, you prepare, you host, you clean up, you rest. But what would you do if you learned you were having more than 8,000 guests?

That was the situation Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptists and Dave Turner, M-W language missions and Brotherhood director, and then later, Twin Cities Baptists, found themselves in when they learned that the North American Indigenous Games, with 8,000 participants from across the United States and Canada, were to be held in Minneapolis, July 28-Aug. 5.

The games originally were scheduled for the town of Bemidji in northern Minnesota but were later moved to Minneapolis. In mid-May, Southern Baptists received word their volunteer help would be welcomed.

Thanks to a few miracles and numerous volunteers, Baptists built bridges of gratitude and respect for future work with many North American Indians and their leaders.

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More than 150 volunteers came from Native American Southern Baptist churches in several states, including more than 80 from Oklahoma, to take part in outreach efforts. Also on hand, for example, were 15 Baptist Navajo volunteers from Farmington, N.M., and a team from the Lumbee tribe in North Carolina.

Among the Baptist efforts:

Illinois volunteers brought their disaster relief unit to provide two meals per day for eight days. Glen Lake Baptist Church, Minnetonka, provided a place for them to sleep. The first Saturday, three feeding lines were set up -- and each backed up half a block with participants awaiting meals. The line finally closed at 9:30 p.m., two hours late. Even though it was the first night, the volunteers went the extra mile: Many had to be up by 3:00 a.m. to have breakfast ready by 6:30.

Making and serving breakfast and supper for up to 4,500 athletes, coaches and staff per meal was more than the Illinois unit had ever done. Every volunteer was vital. Later in the week, many would comment, "We couldn't have done it those first two days without the Navajo volunteers; they were a godsend."

Turner and Twin Cities summer missionaries collected several thousand cups from fast-food restaurants so water could be provided to the athletes "in Jesus' name." An electronic mail message was sent out for others to do the same. New Hope member Bonnie Robertson responded with 2,000 cups left over from her vending business. She had no use for them, but until then didn't know what to do with them. "When I heard the need, I knew why I had those cups and what I should do with them," she said.

Roseville Hmong Baptist Church's men helped put up the huge volunteer and hospitality tents provided by the MWBC. The volunteer tent would be used by the games people for registering all volunteers, while the hospitality tent would be used by the general public as a place to rest. Athletes in their colorful jackets and outfits poured out of one bus after another with their coaches and staff. Many found refuge from the sun under the tents that had just been erected. Later in the afternoon, 20 five-gallon water jugs were set up with coolers for both tents. No one would give the coolers time to chill the water: wet was the only need.

And on Sunday when the tents were in danger of blowing down, people at New Hope Baptist Church, Minneapolis, were listening to volunteer coordinator Ellie Watkins' prayer request. They prayed. The tents did not blow down.

At the site, Turner noticed the hospitality tent was almost half caved in on one side and couldn't believe the people standing under it were oblivious to the danger. Quickly he parked his van and ran to the tent. Others noticed the concern on his face and offered to lend a hand. The wind was gusting from 40 to 50 miles an hour, and stakes were pulled right out of the ground. After an hour of work, the crisis was finally under control.

Wayne Bandy, director of missions from Twin Cities Metro Baptist Association, and his wife, Linda, ended up spending a large part of the week serving food and working in other ways. Roseville, Southtown, Glen Lake, New Hope and Roseville Hmong Baptist churches all provided volunteers.

Russell Begaye, director of the Home Mission Board's language church extension division, along with his wife, Helen, arrived on Monday and pitched right in along with the rest.

Many people prayed, having learned about the games or read the prayer requests in state Baptist newspapers and SBCNet Baptist computer service.

"From the very beginning," Turner said, "I've seen this as ... the Lord leading Southern Baptists to open up doors that had been closed to the gospel, with many American Indian tribes seeking to return to their traditional religious roots."

How do you host 8,000 people? You turn it over to the Lord, the one who fed thousands and one day will host a great eternal feast.

Begaye, along with the other Southern Baptist American Indian leaders, already are putting committees together to prepare a volunteer proposal for the 1999 games.

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Edwards, of Minneapolis, is Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention missions growth consultant. David Turner contributed to this story.

Yosemite -- a lif long dream
for missionary Steve Hughes

By David Winfrey

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (BP)--The first time Steve Hughes came to Yosemite National Park, the central Texan barely knew a backpack from the backcountry.

But after 19 years in resort missions, Hughes has become as adept at camping and chucking rocks at bears as he is at evangelism, ministry and teaching.

Since 1990 he has directed Yosemite Resort Ministries, combining student missions and outdoor adventure programs with Christian outreach to the park's 2,400 employees and 4 million annual visitors.

Hughes' mission field may be the most picturesque of any in America. From Half Dome's peak to Yosemite Falls, the park features dramatic landmarks drawing tourists from around the world. But the remoteness from other Southern Baptists and the transitory nature of park workers combine to make this rocky soil to cultivate, in more ways than one.

"In a resort setting, it's about five years before people say, 'Maybe they're OK,' and seven or nine years before they say, 'Maybe they're staying,'" he says.

While Hughes' ministry is long-term, he uses short-term college students for the summer staff of Yosemite Resort Ministries. School is in session each summer as Hughes offers hands-on home missions training. This year, 38 students have led projects ranging from Bible studies and tourists' worship walks to prayer meetings and Christian sports clinics for local residents.

"My ministry in the summer is to expose students to different viewpoints of ministry," says Hughes, 38. "So many people are scared of trying something new because it might fail."

Most students serve as Innovators, a program coordinated by the Home Mission Board. They raise their own support working in the park, and they participate in ministries afterwards. Hughes encourages students to befriend co-workers and be open to witnessing opportunities.

"The thing I love about the Innovators is it's often the first time they've had a close relationship with a non-Christian," he says.

Hughes tries to instill in them the same enthusiasm for Christian ministry he gained in 1975, when as a 19-year-old he tried a summer experiment in backcountry witnessing.

Bill Sims -- Hughes' predecessor at Yosemite -- recruited him and two other Texas A&M students for eight weeks of hiking and sharing the gospel with anyone they met on the trail or at their campsite.

"I had never been backpacking in my whole life," Hughes recalls. "It was quite the eye-opening experience for me. God used it as a real builder for my faith."

The trio stopped only once a week to share their testimonies with a church.

"They would give us a love offering to buy our backpacking food for the next week."

Not all their contacts accepted Christ, but as Baptist Johnny Appleseeds they sowed the gospel with hundreds of hikers, preparing the way for other Christians to harvest.

"In any witnessing situation, hopefully you will leave the impact of the gospel in their lives so the next time someone shares Christ with them they'll be more open to it," he says. "You see that little gleam in their eye that says they understand a little more."

Hughes says he felt the call to resort missions that summer. After college he taught school -- a job that left his summers free for directing backpacking ministries in Texas' Big Bend National Park.

In 1990, he was asked to direct Yosemite Resort Ministries. "This job is what I always dream d of in college," he adds. "It was 14 years later until I got a full-time job doing this."

Students say they learned this summer how to apply their Christian faith in whatever situation they find themselves.

Katie Robinson, 19, of Tulsa, Okla., says God has taught her "how to be strong through him out of my comfort zone."

"I want to be a foreign missionary someday, and this is very foreign to me," says Robinson, a student at Oklahoma Baptist University. "Oklahoma isn't anything at all like this."

Lois Grandmason, 20, of Austin, Texas, says she learned to take advantage of every witnessing opportunity. "The Lord has shown me that I need to be ready in season and out and not to be timid."

Leslie Patrick, 19, of Plano, Texas, says she's been spiritually challenged to both know and live her beliefs. "At home, I hang out with all Christian people," she says. "It's hard to accept that some people don't want God in their life."

Adrian Holguin, 25, of Albuquerque, N.M., says he's met a lot of co-workers who need to know about Christ. "When you ask somebody why they came to (work at) Yosemite, the majority of the time it's the reasons that show you there is some lack of direction in their lives," he says. "They came here because it's beautiful. They're seeking something, they just don't know what it is."

In addition to directing students in the summer, Hughes pastors a church in El Portal, an employees community just outside the park gate. Hughes says he will focus on growing the congregation of about 50 in the next couple of years as the Park Service expands housing there.

He says he also hopes members will take ownership of more ministry opportunities in the park to continue them year-round -- not just when the Innovators come in the summer.

Several church mission teams come to Yosemite each year. One group this summer helped Hughes distribute 400 care bags for park employees. Filled with homemade cookies, gum and a gospel tract, the bags boost awareness of Hughes ministry while teaching church members new ideas they can use in their community.

"The whole goal of all of this," he reflects, "is so all of the volunteers can go back home and use their experiences here and relate it to their ministries at home."

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(BP) photos of Hughes (both horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press. A color slide is available upon request. Cutlines are on the SBCNet News Room.

Missionary profile:
Steve Hughes

Baptist Press
9/8/95

Name: Steve Hughes.

Ministry: Director of Yosemite Resort Ministries and pastor of El Portal Baptist Church.

Birthday: March 20, the first day of spring.

Hobbies: Climbing, backpacking, astronomy.

Favorite book: "Walk Across America" by Peter Jenkins. "All the experiences he had just highlight ministry opportunities."

Favorite film: "Bambi Meets Godzilla."

Favorite Bible passage: Isaiah 52:7.

Family: Wife Karen, sons Chad, 14, and Josh, 11.

What I like most about being a home missionary: "The ministering to and with the college students who work with me in the summer."

Please pray for: El Portal Baptist Church, that membership would grow both numerically and spiritually.

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**Dealing with hungry bears
among missionary's challenges** **By David Winfrey**

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (BP)--Most home missionaries don't often sleep with a pile of rocks beside their head. But then, few have to run off hungry bears stealing food.

Steve Hughes is well-experienced in such challenges. One of his jobs directing Yosemite Resort Ministries involves leading church groups, seminary classes and others in backcountry hiking.

Black bears are a common hazard in these mountains. Hughes trains campers in standard bear-repellant procedures -- stacking rocks near their sleeping bags so they can wak up throwing at a bear after their food. He calls it bear tag. "The object is not to get tagged by the bear."

So far, he's been successful. Bears regularly pilfer campers' food, but rarely confront the campers. Hughes admits, however, he has been charged three times. Fortunately, he says, they were "bluff-charges." The bear stopped and turned before reaching Hughes.

He instructs all backpackers to store candy bars, toothpaste and other edibles in canisters that bears can't open. Leaving food in backpacks is an invitation for bears to shred your gear, resulting in a miserable trip and the high cost of replacing equipment.

He recalls one experience training his new student missionary who would coordinate backpacking trips that summer. Hughes intentionally chose a site popular among bears. "I always want my people to get used to being around bears so they can deal with them later."

About 11 p.m., nearby campers began screaming about bears near their gear. "They're banging their pots and pans and yelling and screaming, which of course does nothing to the bear."

Hughes says he grabbed his granite, walked past the pot-bangers and heaved rocks at the bear. As the bear ran, Hughes followed after it. "You always have to chase it out of camp a good ways. Otherwise, it'll just turn right back and go to the packs again," he explains.

"I was chasing it out of camp and heard this scrambling noise up a tree, and I've h ard bears climb trees before. I was thinking, 'Boy that bear was fast.'

"As I'm thinking that, I'm rounding this big old huge Ponderosa pine and as I'm looking up the tree with my flashlight trying to see the bear, I come toe-to-toe with this mama bear. That was her cub who'd climbed the tree."

The bear growled, Hughes screamed, and the student thought the resort missionary count had been reduced by one. "I did compose myself enough to throw a rock at it, and it went on off," he says. "The guys in camp thought I was nuts."

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**Student's Yosemite ministry
included 'worship walks'**

By David Winfrey

**Baptist Press
9/8/95**

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (BP)--The morning chill is beginning to break as a dozen people gather for worship.

There's no steeple or pews. In fact, there isn't even a building. Only a student willing to spend her summer as a cashier so she can help people worship the Creator in one of creation's more beautiful settings.

Toni Wolverton, 20, of Longview, Texas, was one of 36 Innovators this summer in Yosemite National Park. Innovators are college students working in home missions during the summer while taking local jobs for financial support.

Wolverton's work with Yosemite Resort Ministries included leading Sunday morning "worship walks" at Yosemite Falls. These 40-minute devotional hikes included prayer, Scripture reading and time for reflection in th dramatic scenery of the 1,750-foot falls.

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Nationwide, 179 students served as Innovators this summer -- the most ever, says Van Simmons, associate director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's student mission department, which helps recruit volunteers and coordinates the program.

In Yosemite, Innovators are encouraged to befriend co-workers, leading to witnessing opportunities. "It's one of the best summers of my life, but it's also one of the most challenging," says Wolverton, a student at Kilgore Junior College.

Other students were involved in such ministries as Christian day camps for the children of park guests, sports clinics for park employees' kids and a Christian coffeehouse.

Wolverton says she used the worship walks to introduce her co-workers to Christianity. "It's for people who wouldn't step foot in a church, but maybe they'll come take a walk with me and I can share with them more one-on-one."

At one point in the trail, she encouraged worshipers to be grounded in God like boulders in the river -- unmoved by whatever flows around them. Afterwards, she explains this summer taught her the importance of living a daily Christian life that is a witness to others and keeps herself focused on God.

"I've learned a lot about spending time with God and how important that is," she says. "You have to know it in your heart and tell it in your own words."

Among the rewards is watching God at work in the lives of people around her. "Sometimes we don't have to say a word. They (non-Christians) are the ones who bring it up.

"They say, 'You're always smiling. What do you have that I don't?'" she recounts. "It's just a perfect opportunity to tell them about Jesus."

More information about the Innovators program is available from state convention offices or the Home Mission Board.

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(BP) photo of Wolverton (vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

**Ministry in parks requires
sensitivity, missionary says**

By David Winfrey

**Baptist Press
9/8/95**

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (BP)--Worship and ministry activities in public areas require both sensitivity and innovation, says Southern Baptist home missionary Steve Hughes.

As director of Yosemite Resort Ministries, Hughes says he is often told "no" by park administrators.

"My suggestion is do what you can do," said Hughes, who has counseled other Southern Baptists on the use of public property for Christian events.

Park rangers who initially refused Hughes' requests were the same ones who said yes after getting to know him, he adds.

"Ministry is not confined within the terms of greeting someone and giving them the 'Four Spiritual Laws,'" he says. Through developing relationships Hughes says he has gained permission to conduct Christian day camps in the campgrounds and worship walks on the hiking trails.

"When you go to a park administrator and ask, 'What can we do to help you?' it begins to open up those doors," he said. "You have to go in with the attitude: What are the needs, and how can you as the church address those to provide ministry?"

The issue is especially visible in Yosemite, where church groups can no longer hold religious services in an open area called Church Bowl.

Park officials try to direct all religious activities into the park's chapel, he says. "The park service does not want to even be seen as giving the connotation that they are giving preferential treatment to a religious group."

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Hughes said visiting church groups sometimes ask why he does not challenge park officials more about their regulations. His answer: "Are you going to win the battle but lose the war?"

Demanding one's way can cause resentment cost and future ministry opportunities to park officials, he notes.

"I don't want any issue that we may fight on to be a detriment to our witness in the park and to the employees," he says. "A lot of it is building those relationships so they can trust you not to offend the public or do anything weird."

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Pastor combines loves
for God, great outdoors

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
9/8/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The great outdoors is often inspiring. To a Tennessee pastor and backpacker, it inspired the creation of a Christian devotional booklet based on backpacking, climbing and canoeing.

Bob Landham says the idea for "Ripstop" came to him two years ago while hiking Mt. Rogers on a portion of the Appalachian Trail in southwest Virginia.

Upon reaching a summit, he saw a Christian youth leader reading to his group from a devotion based on a football player. "I thought, 'Gosh. Here you've got this incredible place and you're reading from a smelly locker room.'"

Ripstop's devotions are drawn from personal outdoor experiences, said Landham, minister of education at Nashville's Two Rivers Baptist Church. "I grew up in a camping family."

Landham also is a former backpacking instructor in Mobile, Ala., for Centrifuge, Southern Baptists' summer camp for teen-agers. After seminary, he and wife, Cindy, spent four months hiking the Appalachian Trail, traveling about three-quarters of the 2,100-mile route from Maine to Georgia.

"We have a little over 400 miles to go," Landham says. "With a real job and family that could take at least four years, and probably five, to finish it."

Written in a conversational style, Ripstop has seven devotions based on a variety of outdoor topics. One titled "Strike the Match" compares salvation to lighting a cooking stove; another about spiritual immaturity is called "Stupid Tourist Questions."

The title Ripstop comes from a type of nylon fabric woven to prevent a hole or tear from becoming a major failure in the garment. Likewise, the "guide book" is intended to prevent minor spiritual problems from developing into big ones, Landham says.

"There are so many great illustrations that the Lord has shown me -- whether in backpacking or canoeing or climbing -- that have revealed his character," he says. "If it helps, that's great. If not, then Cindy and I will hand them out to our friends."

Landham says he has written other devotions for two more booklets, one that is broad-based and another exclusively based on backpacking lessons. "The problem is I've got to pay for publishing guide one first," he says laughing. "This is all shoestring kind of stuff."

The 16-page booklet costs \$1.75 and is available from Landham at (615) 868-7725.

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