

In new post, Iorg sees grassroots passion, commitment among Southern Baptists

NASHVILLE (BP) – Southern Baptists are passionate, committed and invested in the Convention’s Gospel mission, Jeff Iorg has witnessed in his first six months as president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, reinforcing his commitment to the task.

“Rank and file of Southern Baptists really believe in what we’re doing. They love our mission boards; they’re committed to our seminaries,” Iorg said on the Dec. 13 episode SBC This Week, available here. “They are involved appropriately in various aspects of ministry through their churches and their local areas and in their state conventions.

“And I found just a palpable excitement and support out there among grassroots Southern Baptists.”

Iorg made the assessment after months of travel to state conventions and other meetings with Southern Baptists across the nation, speaking on the weekly podcast hosted by SBC EC Vice President for Communications Brandon Porter and Baptist Press Managing Editor Laura Erlanson.

Iorg addressed current and upcoming challenges and opportunities facing the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, including the 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program, the 2025 SBC Annual Meeting and ongoing work to respond to and prevent sexual abuse .

He described the progress made in sexual abuse response and alongside the routine work of the committee, such as leading

the annual convention, managing the Cooperative Program budget and the administrative challenges common to large organizations.

“The (Guidepost Solutions) report that was done about the Executive Committee and the Southern Baptist Convention along those lines, the resulting legal conflicts that have ensued and then resolving those. And then of course, all of that has to be paid for,” Iorg said of current challenges the EC faces. “And those challenges are real and have to be addressed pretty consistently and intentionally by the Executive Committee right now. And that means, of course, by me as well.”

The EC will make recommendations at its February meeting in advance of the 2025 SBC Annual Meeting that will address sexual abuse response and prevention, Iorg said, and hopes to follow through on messengers’ directive to hire a director of sexual abuse prevention and response and build the necessary organizational support for the position.

He expressed excitement for the Dallas meeting and the centennial celebration of the Cooperative Program, the funding mechanism for Southern Baptist work.

“But I would think the overriding hope that I have for Southern Baptist in 2025 is that we will be riveted on our mission of getting the Gospel to the nations and making disciples of people who come to faith in Christ,” he said, “that we might then lead them to join us in God’s mission of getting the Gospel to more people and making disciples among those converts, so that we might lead them to join us in this ever continuing cycle of fulfilling God’s mission.”

Iorg began leading the EC just weeks before the 2024 SBC Annual Meeting in Indianapolis after a career including pastorates, state convention leadership and most recently, presidency of Gateway Seminary. Iorg expressed his pleasure upon seeing the unity displayed among members of the Executive

Committee and the competency of its staff.

“When I came, I heard these stories about how (the Executive Committee) was in such disarray, and I suppose there have been moments in the past where it has been,” Iorg said. “But certainly in the past six months, it’s been remarkably unified.”

He spoke of EC votes at the September meeting that were nearly unanimous and private conversations and committee meetings that were congenial, with what he considered appropriate discussion and debate about the issues and questions at hand.

“I’ve been very encouraged by the unity that the Executive Committee itself has shown along the way,” he said.

Additionally, he expressed a joy in working with the EC staff, describing workers as competent and committed.

“Working with people here has been a pleasure,” Iorg said. “The people who work here are very competent. They’re very knowledgeable about the work of Southern Baptists and about how our entities work and how they need to work together. They’re very aware of both the limitations and the possibilities of being at the Executive Committee, and they really want to do the right thing.”