

Iorg: 'Ministry is difficult, but it's not complicated'

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The Christian Index

In an interview with The Christian Index, Jeff Iorg, president of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, celebrated the success Georgia Baptists are seeing in reaching their state with the gospel of Jesus, and exhorted them to "stay focused."

The Christian Index recently had the opportunity to speak with Iorg, and asked him about the work that Georgia Baptists are doing and the fruits that he is seeing from that work.

Reacting to the news that reported baptisms for 2024 will top 25,000 and that Cooperative Program giving in Georgia is up from 2023, Iorg said, "That is fantastic news – 25,000 baptisms and an increase in giving is absolutely fantastic news. And I celebrate that for Georgia Baptists."

He continued, "The reason that you're able to do that is because despite all the distractions, Georgia Baptists have stayed focused on the core task of sharing the gospel with people, discipling them to live for Jesus, including discipling them to give their resources so that the gospel can go around the world."

'It's supposed to be simple'

Iorg quoted from a recent episode of his podcast, "Ministry is difficult, but it's not complicated. It's supposed to be simple. Share the gospel, make disciples, and build churches that send people to share the gospel, make disciples, and build churches. And you're doing that in Georgia."

“Stay focused in Georgia on those core things. And as you do them well, you’ll keep having the progress you’re describing.”

Looking ahead to Georgia Baptists’ ReTool conferences, Iorg said he is excited about coming. “That fires me up, because I’m coming to say, this is what you’re doing, and I celebrate it. And now here’s how you keep doing it.”

When asked about the challenges and opportunities facing the SBC headed into this year’s annual meeting in Dallas, Iorg said, “Well, the convention has two things simultaneously. One, we have some serious issues that we’re working through. Those are very well publicized and no need to say they’re not there. We’ve got to work on them.

“But on the other side of it, when we come together in Dallas, while we’ll deal with these issues in the business sessions, we’ll also be celebrating record numbers of missionaries in the missionary pipeline, record numbers of church plants. We’ll be celebrating significant, if not record enrollments at our seminaries.”

‘Moving forward’

Those results are possible because of continued cooperation between churches, Iorg said. “We are seeing the work the cooperative program makes possible flourish in so many ways. As we go toward Dallas, yes, we will focus on the issues. We’ve got to keep resolving those. We’ve got to keep moving forward.

“But,” he added, “let’s keep the real focus on the incredible breadth of good that’s being done by the cooperative program and by what it accomplishes through us as Southern Baptists.”

Lastly, Iorg was asked what he would say to pastors and church members to encourage them about ongoing cooperation.

“First thing I would say,” Iorg responded, “is look around

Georgia and see what cooperation has done. No one church, and there are some magnificent, big, strong churches in Georgia, and not one of them could have done what Georgia Baptists have done through cooperation. Just look around Georgia, and when you see that, why would you not want to keep doing that?"

That cooperation, Iorg pointed out, has led to "building a powerhouse state convention and a powerhouse of ministry resource. Not only people, money, energy, all of it, for all of Southern Baptists that come out of Georgia. And so if I were sitting down with a Georgia Baptist pastor or a Georgia Baptist layperson, I would say, if you want to know if cooperation works, look around Georgia. And if you want to know why it'll work for the next 100 years, just look at the track record. And if you see this and you see all it's done, why wouldn't you want to keep doing this?"

Iorg said other denominations "can do a little bit of good, and certainly you'll find that in Georgia, but you won't find anything in Georgia like what Southern Baptists have done. Not even close. Look at cooperation, and the proof is in the results. Look at it and see what's happened and then stay with it."