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Planting New Churches

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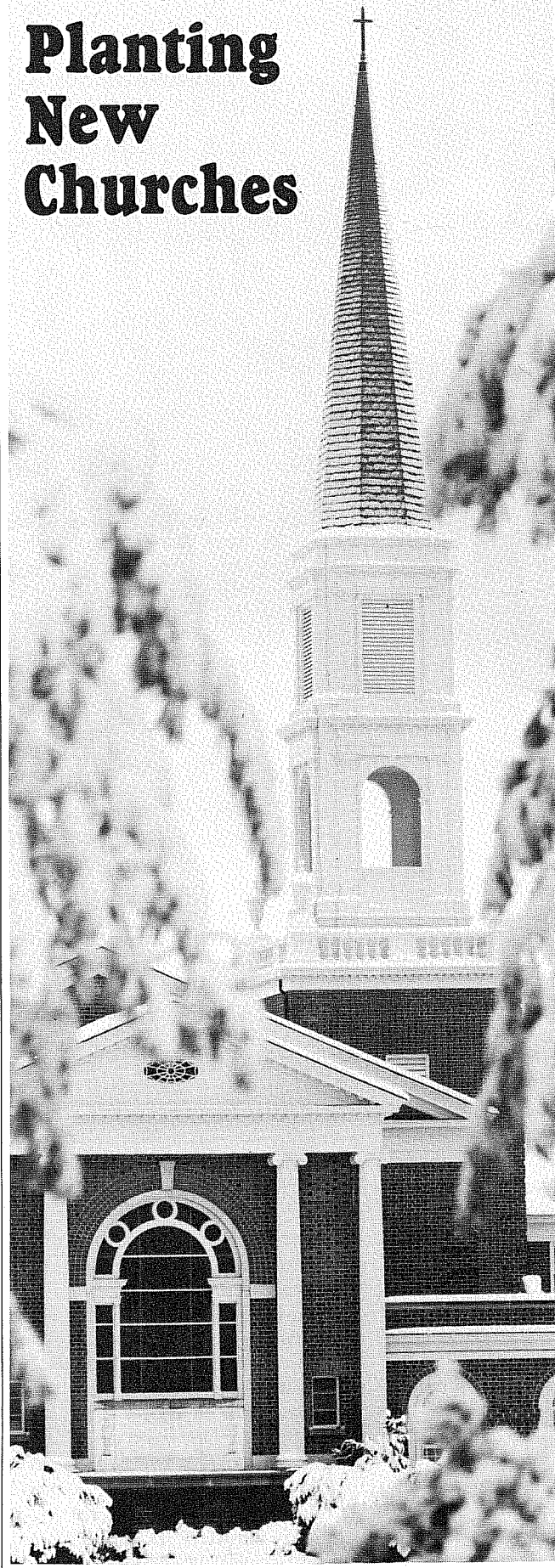
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Planting New Churches



CHURCH UPDATES

by Elmer Towne

Church planting is a refreshing trend in the United States today. Most conservative denominations have someone assigned to church planting, and they regularly report their progress. The Bob Jones University magazine, *Faith for the Family*, lists new churches planted by its alumni. Baptist Bible College, Springfield, Missouri, is recognized for the great number of churches planted by its graduates. The Church of the Nazarene reports starting approximately 50 new churches in the Pacific Northwest last year.

The Baptist Bible Fellowship plants churches through state fellowships—local churches helping new churches. In most states, a church planter qualifies for \$600 monthly support from the Baptist Bible Fellowship after he has been in the field three months.

Two years ago, Jerry Falwell organized Liberty Baptist Fellowship for Church Planting and announced a goal of planting or revitalizing 5,000 churches before the year 2000. He stated that the Great Commission is best carried out by planting new churches that will evangelize their towns for Christ. The fellowship of independent Baptist churches received approximately \$25,000 from churches planted by Liberty graduates and other independent Baptist churches. The money helped support church planters on the field. Eleven men were helped by Liberty Baptist Fellowship last year; this year's goal is 25. Support is not limited to Liberty graduates only.

The Thomas Road Baptist Church gives to help plant new churches through Liberty Baptist Fellowship, the Baptist Bible Fellowship of Virginia, and to independent Baptist churches not associated with any fellowship.

Liberty graduates planted 29 churches in 1982 and a total of 213 churches since 1973. The largest, Calvary Road Baptist Church, Springfield, Virginia, is pastored by David Rhodenhizer and averages over 1,000 in attendance. Churches pastored by Liberty graduates received \$14,561,776 in offerings last year and baptized 7,137 people. Growth in these churches is reflected by the following statistics:

Average Sunday school attendance	138
Average church attendance	162
Average membership	151
Average baptisms per church	33
Average income per church	\$69,013.00
Per capita giving per member/weekly	8.19

Obviously, 213 is a long way from the goal of 5,000 churches, but that figure does not include pastorates assumed by Liberty men, churches planted on the mission field, or second generation churches planted out of existing churches. Dr. C.T. Abrahams, a graduate in India, reports starting 52 new churches. Al Henson, Lighthouse Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee, has helped plant 15 churches not yet counted. By the year 2000, the goal of planting or revitalizing 5,000 churches will be a reality.