

INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

Subject: Graph of SBC Churches by Year Organized Date: Jan. 27, 1989

To: Charles Chaney and David Bunch

From: Clay Price

Attached is an updated and expanded version of an earlier graph showing SBC churches by year organized. We took the 1987 UCL and plotted churches based on their reported year of organization; thus the graph represents currently existing churches only--it does not account for churches that have been dropped.

You should discount the downturn appearing for the 1985 to 1986 period. Our research on the lifecycle of churches shows there is a time lag between the time a church organizes and the time it first reports on the UCL. On the average, about 30 percent of the churches organized in a particular year actually turn in a UCL report. The following year another 30 to 35 percent report. Approximately 90 percent of the churches organized in a particular year will have shown up on the UCL after four or five years.

This time lag is what makes it impossible for us to know how many SBC churches were actually organized each year. When we report the number of "new" churches each year, we use the number of "churches reporting for the first time." Approximately one-third of these first-time-reporting-churches are three or more years old.

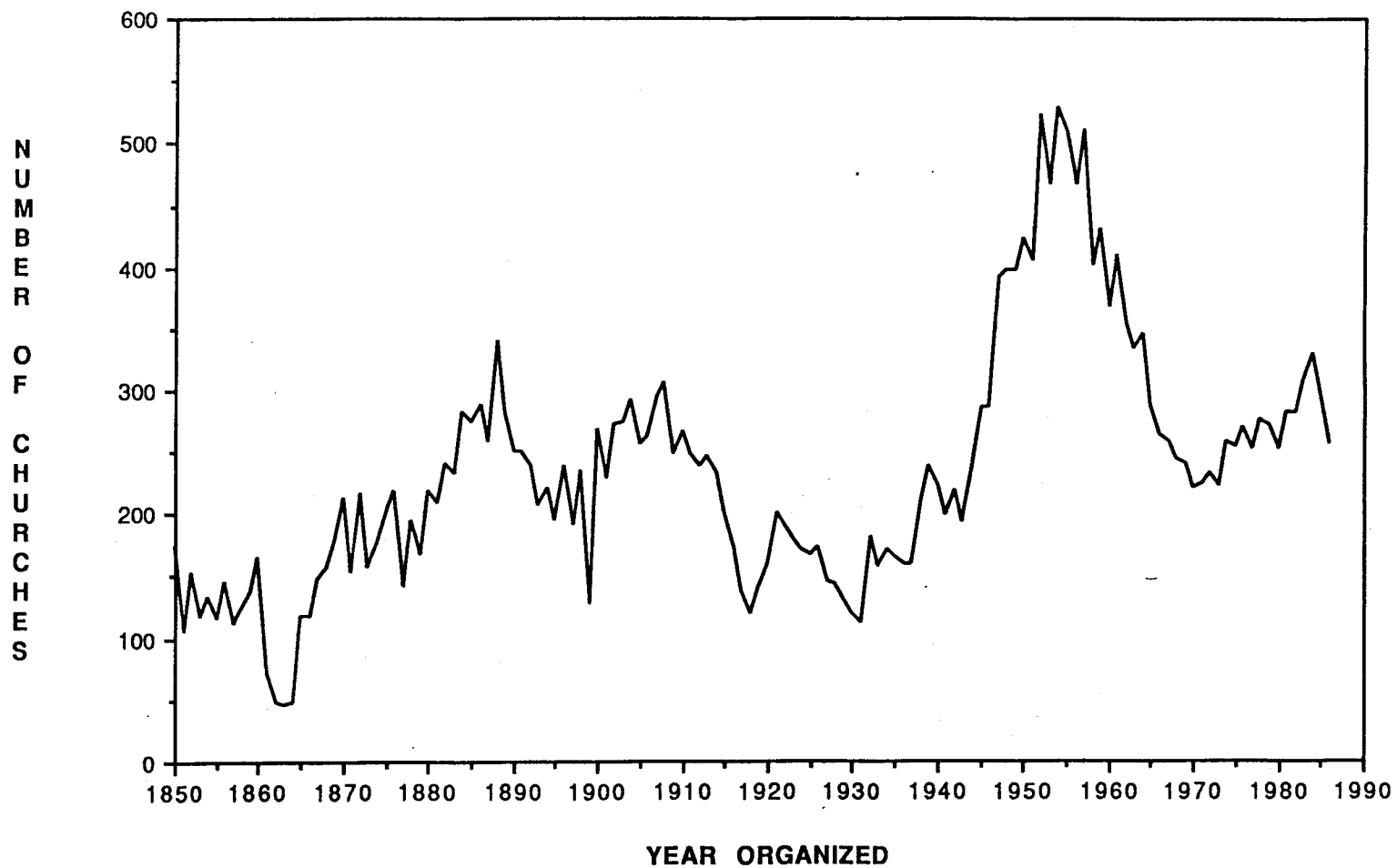
Further research will help us understand why this time lag occurs. It is probably a combination of several factors: 1) lack of information about reporting; 2) confusion about church organization and procedures (especially among language churches); 3) no church clerk and/or lack of knowledge about duties; 4) confusion over year of organization versus year started as a mission; 5) delay between the time a church organizes and the time it is officially accepted into the association after a period of watchcare; 6) some churches may be organized as independent churches that later choose to affiliate with the SBC.

I hope this brief commentary is helpful as we continue our research and discussion on new churches and new church growth. In about a month Phil Jones and I will have an updated lifecycle paper on churches organized between 1972 and 1987.

CLP

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Phil Jones

**EXISTING SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION CHURCHES BY
YEAR ORGANIZED, 1850 TO 1986¹**



¹ Based on 1987 UCL data. Data for 1987 is not included due to time lag in reporting new churches.