

Falwell's church continues fast-paced growth

November 2, 2007

Posted: 11/02/07

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Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Thomas Road Baptist Church, the Virginia megachurch founded by the late Jerry Falwell, had the largest numeric growth recorded in a new list of the nation's fastest-growing churches.

Outreach magazine reported the church in Lynchburg, Va., saw an increase in overall weekly attendance of 4,750 within the last year.

The church ranked No. 9 on the magazine's list of fastest-growing churches. Researchers averaged numerical and percentage growth of attendees to determine the rankings.

Thomas Road was listed No. 8 in the magazine's ranking of largest churches in the United States, with an average attendance of 17,445.

In a statement, the church reported more than 1,000 people have joined since Falwell's death May 15. His son, Jonathan Falwell, now leads Thomas Road Baptist Church.

Outreach, a church leadership magazine based in Vista, Calif., compiled the

lists in partnership with Ed Stetzer, director of research at LifeWay Research. The attendance figures are based on self-reported data from the churches cited.

The top five fast-growing churches listed are:

- 1. Iglesia Cristiana Segadores de Vida, Hollywood, Fla.*
- 2. Community of Faith, Cypress.*
- 3. Valley Bible Fellowship, Bakers-field, Calif.*
- 4. Community Christian Church, Naperville, Ill.*
- 5. The ROC (Richmond Outreach Center), Richmond, Va.*

The top five largest churches listed are:

- 1. Lakewood Church, Houston (47,000)*
- 2. Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, Ill. (23,500)*
- 3. Second Baptist Church, Houston (23,198)*
- 4. Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, Calif. (22,000)*
- 5. LifeChurch.tv, Edmond, Okla. (19,907)*

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