

The Church Doctor Report

We Help Churches... One Christian at a Time.

Church Doctor
MINISTRIES



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PURPOSE: To connect with those who have an active relationship with Church Doctor Ministries as peers in ministry, clients, and partners in prayer and support.

The Church Doctor Report provides a quick read of strategic and influential information. This information is free to share as long as the source is respected: *The Church Doctor Report*, www.churchdoctor.org.

The Church Government Flu

It's a virus from several foreign sources. It infects whole churches. It has been known to paralyze effective outreach, rupture relationships, encourage malignant malcontents, and rob the Body of Christ of joy, enthusiasm, and courage.

It is considered one of the most serious diseases infecting the Christian Movement. The Church Government Flu is a pandemic issue among congregations of every size, tradition, everywhere.

The symptoms are easily identified: (1) Congregational meetings identified by members as the lowest part of their Christian experience; (2) Frustrated leaders who work, pray, and study to solve a church issue only to have their solution overturned by others; (3) Gifted leaders who refuse to be leaders of the church, leaving the church to select any "warm body" willing to serve; (4) Volunteers on the verge of ecclesiastical exhaustion, commonly referred to as "burn out"; (5) De-motivating meetings consumed with bureaucratic details; (6) Discouraged pastors overwhelmed by the lethargic malaise that prohibits so much ministry from being accomplished; (7) The hyperactive tendency of control-oriented nay-sayers to sap excitement out of every vision; (8) The consistent tendency of the group to embrace the status quo; (9) The Body of Christ's predisposition against change, making non-essentials sacred and nit-picking a major in minors; and, (10) Spiritual leaders experience blatant disrespect for authority.

Kent Hunter is leader of Church Doctor Ministries, a consulting organization that works primarily with healthy churches providing expert diagnosis and analysis, as well as recommendations that lead to action plans. These efforts are aimed at helping churches maximize their efforts, becoming more healthy and effective as missional churches in the 21st Century.



See the totally new Web site at www.churchdoctor.org.

Stop: rate your church:

Not a Symptom				We've got this one!	
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10			
(1) _____	(2) _____	(3) _____	(4) _____	(5) _____	
(6) _____	(7) _____	(8) _____	(9) _____	(10) _____	

If your score is 50 or more, ask your leaders to rate the symptoms and read on!

The Holy Land: Lessons from a new perspective.

Kent Hunter will lead a tour of the Holy Land December 26, 2007 through January 5, 2008. Beyond the lessons from Scripture that come alive as you see the Holy Land sights, Kent will teach how what happened in each place teaches you to be a more mission-minded Christian in the 21st Century. Call or e-mail for more information today:
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How Did We Get Here from There?

There are several theories about how so many churches in the West (and those exported by western missionaries elsewhere) have developed impractical, self-destructive, and unbiblical forms of church government. The present mess may be a confluence of several of the following: (1) Colonial North America fleeing the State Churches of Europe overreacting to the hierarchical monarchs who ruled and often abused the faithful believers of local congregations. The extreme makeover in the Western Churches takes the form of congregational church government—a utopian attempt at pure democracy. Everybody decides everything about everything. (2) Another influence on

church government is the age of rationalism, which ushered in order and detail with a vengeance. Robert's Rules of Order may be a distinct result of this thinking. While most church members wouldn't know it, Robert, himself, had questions about the universality of his rules for all organizations, including churches. Interestingly, many churches implicitly regard Robert's rules as sacred—the Bible of many church meetings. (3) Post-World War II growth in disciplines of management theory are still making their way through the business world. With this influence came organizational charts, church business plans, job descriptions, and, perhaps, the notion that the local minister is the employee hired to do ministry for the people—an Old Testament throwback to the high priest, minus the theological respect.

Six General Forms of Church Government

1. *Hierarchy*. Based originally on the Old Testament priestly function, this is a form of church government by dictatorship. In some Pentecostal, independent, and ethnic churches, this form of government is prevalent. In Africa, the tribal culture lends itself to the pastor-as-tribal-chief concept of benevolent dictator. This type of government tends to overlook the "priesthood of all believers" and the "equipping of the saints" concept of the New Testament.
2. *Democracy* is common among churches in the West, usually described as a congregational form of government. It takes

HELP FOR HEALTHY CHURCHES TO BECOME EVEN MORE EFFECTIVE

- "Form your purpose by asking for counsel; then carry it out using all the help you can get." (Proverbs 20:18, *The Message*)
- "Good leaders cultivate honest speech, they love advisors who tell them the truth." (Proverbs 16:13, *The Message*)
 - "I believe Church Doctor Ministries is a viable organization in the Church of Christ. I also give thanks to God that there is a ministry that equips people "to become disciples" in a world that is in desperate need of Jesus Christ."
- Waterville, Ohio
 - "We really enjoyed having a Church Doctor with us. He helped us understand our past and see hope for the future. It was time and money well spent."
- Grabill, Indiana
 - "The Church Government Consultation provided a safe, productive way to look at how we do church. We had a chance to seek what Scripture teaches, the cultural habits we have picked up, and what adjustments need to be made to get us in line with what the Bible teaches."
- La Mesa, California

Ten Antidotes to Cure Church Government Flu

1. Focus on the proper purpose for church government: A system to help the local church discern God's will when making decisions.
2. Help members recognize that to move from maintenance to mission requires change—and change requires empowered leaders. That requires, in most churches, a different form of church government.
3. To whatever degree allowed, move toward an apostolic theocracy (seeking God's will through relational leadership).
4. Teach the realities that: (1) Whenever God does a work, He raises up a leader; (2) Leadership is a spiritual gift given to some in the Body of Christ; (3) Leaders do lead; (4) Good church leaders empower followers by listening and developing trust; (5) This process is about relationships, not votes.
5. The lead pastor must: (1) Take responsibility; (2) Be given authority; (3) Accept accountability.
6. The church leadership team is led by the (senior) pastor, supports and encourages the pastor, and holds the pastor accountable.
7. The effectiveness of the church for the Great Commission increases as the pastor and staff increase leadership and equipping roles and decrease ministry roles.
8. The effectiveness of the church for the Great Commission increases as the congregational members increase ministry roles and decrease leadership roles.
9. Those chosen for the leadership team are mature, experienced Christians who demonstrate a lifestyle of continued Bible study and prayer and reflect a key character trait of humility.
10. The (senior) pastor leads, the staff manages, the leadership team governs, and the membership ministers. This is the healthy model for church government in proper perspective.

I also have the freedom to pursue that position in the county, if I want to be in charge. The republic form of government is saturated with nominations, elections, votes, by-laws, Robert's Rules of Order, etc. This form of government often allows for a group vote on important issues, with the result of

many forms and is sometimes mixed with a republic form of government where a group of leaders are chosen, but under rule of the congregation. Pure democracy doesn't really work anywhere, including a family of four. For example, parents of two young children do not call for an equal vote as to whether the children will attend school.

A congregational form of government de-motivates leaders, especially pastors. Church leaders have much of the responsibility of the congregation, but little authority—a sure formula for frustration. Another recent difficulty from this form of government comes from the influence of secular society, in the form of an entitlement mentality. Increasingly, consumer-oriented westerners are influenced by the culture on what they want rather than what God wants. When different people in a congregation are subconsciously driven by an entitlement/consumer mentality, the result is chaos and division.

3. The *republic* form of church government is, in reality, an attempt at survival by developing a hybrid of democracy. Most states and municipalities operate as republics. I live in DeKalb county, Indiana and pay taxes. However, I do not get to decide which potholes in the road get fixed first. Nor am I qualified. If I was asked, I would probably choose the potholes on my road. However, I do not get to decide. But I do get to vote for the person who does decide.

EMERSION OPPORTUNITY: EXPERIENCE WHAT GOD IS DOING TO REACH POST- MODERN, SECULAR PEOPLE

Each June and November, Church Doctor Ministries introduces a group of 20 North American Christians to the most profound move of God we have seen in the world today. The revival in Sheffield, England, is spreading around the world. Due to the growing demand, we are now taking this trip twice each year. Call or write for an application form for June or November 2008. Comments from the June 2007 team:

- "Through the teaching and ministry of the Holy Spirit, I feel freed up to be myself and let God use me for reaching others (and He will!)"
- "Both the emersion at St. Thomas and the experience of staying with a church family were invaluable."
- "I allowed myself to be ministered to and am now ready to be the servant God has called me to be."
- "I think that this will ultimately end up being one of the most life-changing times of my Christian Journey."

disempowering leaders. This leads to fewer people willing to subject themselves to the frustrations. It allows less-qualified people to enter the election pool, which leads to the downward spiral of leadership for the church and more frustration for the pastor and staff.

4. An *oligarchy* is a prominent form of church government, particularly in smaller churches. However, it is not official! It will not be described in the constitution. An oligarchy results when, no matter how the church is officially organized, it is led by one or two (or more) dominant families...or individuals.

Oligarchies often result in power struggles, especially if anyone tries to grow the church. If God grants growth to the church, the dominant family—or families—senses a loss of control. This most often results in mass rebellion by those in control. This is the classic “pioneer/homesteader” range war found frequently in smaller, but growing, congregations. This is a predictable outcome, especially when there is no clear vision or clearly articulated philosophy of ministry.

5. *Co-equal plural eldership* is practiced by many churches. Elders are chosen or elected and the pastor is considered an equal elder. (The word “elder” can be substituted for many other words like “leader” or “team member.”) The challenge with this form of government is accountability. Who, ultimately, is in charge? The answer is “no one!” I’m reminded of the joke, “John 3:16: ‘For God so loved the world that He did not send a committee.’”
6. *Theocracy*. This word means “rule of God.” The lens through which this format of church government is shaped is a commitment that government is a way to make decisions that reflect the will of God for the local church. It is a structure that focuses on what God wants. 1 Peter 4:1-2 says, “Since Jesus went through everything you’re going through and more, learn to think like him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you’ll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want (*The Message*).”

KEY RESOURCES

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-  Hunter, Kent R. *Activating Members for Ministry*. Corunna, IN: Church Doctor Ministries. (audio resource).
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In a theocracy, the church takes seriously the fact that Jesus Christ is the head of His

church. Spiritually mature leaders are chosen. They support the senior pastor, who is called by Jesus Christ to lead. The senior pastor follows Proverbs 15:22, “Without counsel plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed (RSV).” The senior pastor seeks wisdom from the leaders, who are often called elders. Their title implies humility and a willingness to listen to anyone in the church, one-on-one (not in meetings), who has insight for the direction of the church. This recognizes that God can reveal His will to any Christian.

The tone of this type of government is apostolic. The apostles were not elected, but recognized by the fruit of the spirit and the passion for mission. They were respected by believers who understood the full meaning of the commandment to honor one’s father and mother. This teaching indicates that as Christians, we respect all authority and honor our leaders. Of course, there are always those weak spiritually or young in the faith who challenge leaders. Examples are found throughout the New Testament where Paul had to defend his authority.

MULTIPLYING MINISTRY

- ▶ The *Church Doctor Report* is provided at no cost. Forward it to those in your network of influence and add value to their lives!
- ▶ Suggest it to leaders in your church, denomination, network, or fellowship.

Apostolic leadership is by relationship, not by legal protocol. A key ingredient to apostolic leadership is humility, which reflects honesty, integrity, and a willingness to admit mistakes and repent. This requires the teaching of followership, to all members. Their primary responsibilities include: (1) regular prayer for the leaders; (2) input to the elders when God directs; and, (3) ministry in and through the body, according to their gifts.

This form of government respects a flat organization that operates as a team. It is characterized by key servant leadership. The pastor (senior pastor) is a leader of leaders, as was Moses (Numbers 11:16-17). There are no votes, except required by civil law. There are no meetings with quorums or simple majorities. Decisions are made by leaders without votes. They are made by consensus, following prayer and Bible study. There is no debate, just discussion. The leaders speak about decisions just as the New Testament leaders did, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to...” (Acts 15:28).

Changing Church Government

Moving to a biblical form of pain-free church government seems like an easy task. Wrong! For reasons not yet diagnosed, it is an emotional transition for many—particularly those who love control. Changing church government should be handled in the same way you would relocate your church: carefully, slowly, using a process, with objective communication and lead by an outside expert. But the rewards—for leadership and a healthy church—are worth it.

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