

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.

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Young Adults Rising! The SEND Movement

“Hi, Mike! I hope I’m not interrupting you. The church secretary wasn’t at her desk, but I just wanted to say hi.”

“No problem, come on in, Kent. It’s always great to see you,” Mike responded.

“How’s it going?” I asked.

“Well, good, but not without some challenges,” Mike said.

“You know, Mike, in March, we’re going to lead our 18th group of pastors and church leaders to visit some of the amazing churches in England.” I paused to let Mike process. He knew what was coming. “Mike, I’ve invited you before, and if you never go, it won’t change our friendship. I just — well — you know, we’ve talked about some of the challenges you are facing at this church — like every pastor faces — and....”

“Don’t worry,” Mike replied. “I know you want what’s best for my church and for me.”

“You know, Mike, most of the churches in England are declining, near death, or closed. The secularization of the U.K. is about 20 years ahead of the U.S. However, there are a number of churches that are on fire, wall-to-wall young people — very exciting,” I shared.

Kent R. Hunter is the author of 31 books. His latest is the best-selling *Who Broke My Church?*



7 Proven Strategies for Renewal and Revival. Kent teaches the mission content for the SEND Movement. Kent and his colleague, Tracee, lead the annual mission excursion to England.

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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!
- ▶ Forward it to staff and leaders in your church, denomination, network, or fellowship.

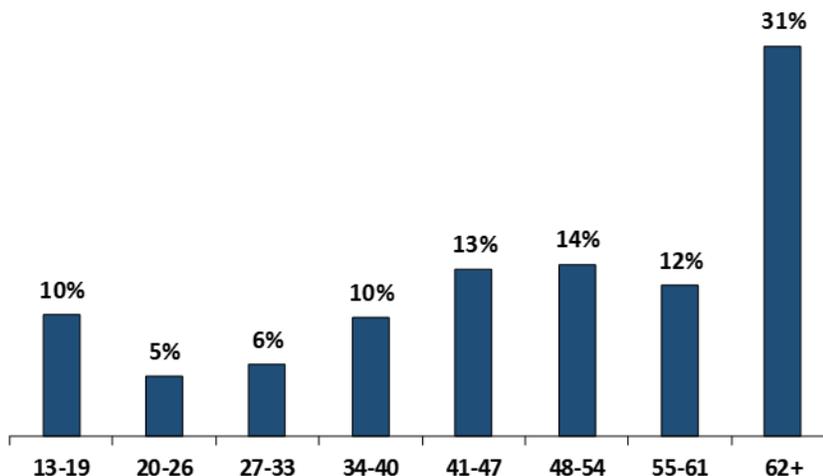
“Yeah, I know, Kent. I’ve heard you talk about that,” Mike replied.

“Well, Mike, I just think if we had those 12 days together and then talk about the experiences during our meals and on the trains, I just think it would give you some fresh ideas and a lot of encouragement. These churches have young people everywhere, and the older people are on fire, too. It’s so exciting. I can tell you about it, but this is one of those things you have to experience. It’s just ‘caught’ better than taught. I promise, you won’t ever be the same.”

Mike paused. “You know, Kent, I will pray about it. What are those dates?”

Reaching Younger Generations

One of the greatest challenges most North American churches face is the loss of young people. Over the past almost four decades, Church Doctor Ministries has worked with nearly 2,000 churches from 78 different denominations, networks, nondenominational, and independent congregations. Here is a graph representing the average age distribution of those in worship:



You don’t have to be a certified Church Doctor or rocket scientist to look at the age demographics and recognize that the future of the church, in general, looks bleak. Look at the age range from 20 to 33. It makes up only 11 percent of the worshipping group. Now look at those *older than 40*: 70 percent of the congregation!

Would it get your attention to know that in these churches we visit in England, it’s amazingly different? We just got input from one of those churches. More than 70 PERCENT of the members in their church are *younger than 40*. Don’t forget, the Christian Movement in England is about 20 years ahead of North America in the decline pattern. But not these churches. There are, perhaps, as many as 200 congregations like this in the U.K.!

We can call these churches “outliers.” They are outside the norm. Do you think you could learn something from them? In truth, every year, I learn even more. Why? Because they continue to learn, and they are always moving about 20 years ahead of the churches on this side of the Atlantic. If you want to see what God is doing and what God *can* do, *England is a*

classroom for the future.

These churches have provided many of the insights that we, at Church Doctor Ministries, share with congregations in North America. If you want to learn how God is moving, working, and blessing, you need to break out of your comfort zone and connect with those where God is working.

There are exciting movements of God elsewhere in the world as well — especially in Africa and parts of South America. The great benefit of the growing churches in England is the similarities in culture and language. It's easier for us to make comparisons.

Perhaps the most amazing area of spiritual growth in England is the impact among young adults. It is especially helpful because, in North America, our ability to reach and keep young adults is, for most churches, a dismal failure.

Young Adult Discipling

Every major movement in history has had a parallel youth movement. Young adults bring energy and enthusiasm to movements. Consider Mary and Joseph on their way to Bethlehem. What about the young adult disciples who followed Jesus? In all likelihood, most of the New Testament movement leaders were young. Most young adults like a challenge, and they are open to learn new strategies. Eight years ago, Church Doctor Ministries launched SEND North America (www.thesendmovement.com). SEND is patterned after the young adult discipleship and spiritual formation course at St. Thomas' Crookes, in Sheffield, England. They call it FORM. The young adults who come out of FORM are some of the most energetic and inspiring people I have ever met. When I first met the leaders and young Christians in FORM, I began praying that our son, Jon, would do the 10-month course of FORM in England. Four years of prayer later, he did! A few years after that, Jon suggested Church Doctor Ministries start something like FORM in the United States. We did, and we call it SEND.

KEY RESOURCES

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After eight years, it is almost impossible to describe the growth of young adults who, each year, complete SEND. The SEND Movement of young adults is the beginning of what could become a major movement of young disciples who will breathe new life into churches in North America.

The SEND Approach

Once a young adult is accepted to SEND, they receive an instruction packet about how to raise the money to participate in SEND. Since they raise that money, it literally costs them nothing, financially. They are coached and guided by phone to find 10 families that will support them at \$50 per month for 10 months. One family can be their own parents; another can be their church. The other eight will no doubt be friends, relatives, and others from their church. Why do we do this? We are training them to raise their own support just like many missionaries do. They are also equipped to be accountable to their support partners with a support letter each month.

SEND lasts 10 months, September through June. The young adults move to northern Indiana. They live with other SEND young adults, by gender, and we help them get part-time secular jobs that do not interfere with their involvement in SEND on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and some weekends. Their time in the secular workplace provides opportunities for them to share their faith, and they are expected to do so.

At the beginning of SEND, the young adults learn about themselves: their spiritual gifts, their temperaments, and their personality profiles. They read the Bible every day and participate in a "huddle" each week, led by a ministry leader. Their teachings are provided by approximately 50 adult, Christian experts in the areas of their teaching. For example, the Christian approach to finance management is taught by a former president of a bank who is a leader in his church and an awesome Christian.

Once each week, they are out in the community, serving, sharing their faith, praying with others, and performing acts of kindness in the name of Christ. They are individually disciplined by the SEND leader and others. Each month, they participate in a weekend mission excursion in various areas such as homeless ministry, jail ministry, and cross-cultural ministry.

KEY RESOURCES

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At the end of the year, the young adults participate in an out-of-country mission trip for 10 to 14 days. Mission trip destinations have included Belize, Guatemala, and South Africa.

Those who feel called to become SEND leaders at their home church or elsewhere return for a second year. They are mentored by the leader of SEND and leaders of Church Doctor Ministries.

SEND Young Adults: The Next Step

SEND young adults may follow any career path. They are high-value assets as church members.

However, most become committed to full-time ministry by the time they finish SEND. They are often hired by churches who see their value as missionaries to their own country. SEND “graduates” have filled several ministry roles: starting another SEND-type training ministry, the foreign mission field, church planting, youth pastor, children’s minister, Christian camp director, counselor, outreach specialist, etc. SEND young adults, wherever they are, will reach other young adults for Christ. *God uses them to bring young adults back to church.*

Adults

It wasn’t long before we heard from adults who wondered if they could experience something like SEND training for themselves. Church Doctor Ministries developed a 36-month experience for churches called *Healthy Churches Thrive!*

Part of the training for church members includes learning how to share your “God stories.” *Healthy Churches Thrive!* includes print and video resources developed for those who want to be used by God to reach out to non-Christians in their social networks. We

10 WAYS TO EXPERIENCE THE SEND MOVEMENT

1. Pray for God to raise up Christians of all ages to move from spiritual maintenance to movement, beginning with you.
2. Read your Bible, and watch for a thousand ways Scripture tells you that you are a missionary to your social network.
3. Look for young adults, ages 18 to 29, who are faithful, available, and teachable, and ask them to take a look at SEND North America (www.thesendmovement.com). It will change their lives.
4. Identify those in your church who have heartburn for lost people, and invite them to consider the next annual mission excursion to England.
5. When you gather in small groups with Christians, ask, “Anyone want to share what God has done in your life since we were last together?” After they get used to it, they will witness, as part of their lives.
6. Look for people in your church who have holy discontent. They are unsettled about the lack of growth in your church. They are leaders for renewal.
7. Ask those with holy discontent to come together and start *Healthy Churches Thrive!* — and let them pay for it, beyond their offerings to church.
8. As you grow through *Healthy Churches Thrive!*, develop a church-wide culture of sharing your God stories.
9. As you grow more through *Healthy Churches Thrive!*, gather a few friends and start SEND Centers. Use the *Alpha* course to introduce newcomers to the Christian faith.
10. Continue to add SEND Centers throughout your community until you have one for every 50 people in worship at your church. As the SEND Centers mature, be open to God’s direction: Some of them may become extensions of your church. It is, at once, the least expensive and most productive way to reach people for Christ.

call this training for adults SEND Plus.

Healthy Churches Thrive! trains church members to develop SEND Centers. A SEND Center is a church member's home that serves as an extension of their church. Equipped members who share their "God stories" invite those who are responsive to join them for dinner at a SEND Center home. The SEND Centers are middle-step mechanisms for receptive people to learn about the Christian faith. In a home, they are spared the "culture shock" of attending a worship service. We have learned that in secular America, it is a huge leap for someone to say they're interested in the Christian faith and then enter the very unfamiliar territory of a worship experience. SEND Centers reflect this biblical concept: The best platform for "catching" Christianity is not a building; it is relationships! Sooner or later, new Christians are ready for worship.

The word "SEND" comes from John 20:21, "As the Father sends me, I send you." The word *send* reflects the idea of God's *mission*. The SEND Movement provides numerous interconnected strategies that are adaptive to the mission field you call your backyard!

Witnessing is telling your story. A witness in a courtroom says, "I was there. It happened to me; I experienced it."

Stop and think about this for a moment: How long have you been a Christ-follower? What has God done in your life? A witness is simply someone who tells another person their God stories, what God has done in their life. SEND young adults learn to do this. It's part of their lifestyle!