

WHY THE SEND NETWORK?



SEND Network

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INTRODUCTION

Why does the Send Network exist?

This is a great question and one that you should be asking. In our day, there is no shortage of church planting networks and leaders doing amazing work to see churches planted. We praise God for the efforts of all those who labor under the banner of Jesus Christ.

We believe that the Send Network is positioned to play a unique role in the work God is doing across North America and we're intent on doing everything we can to see healthy churches planted. This short e-book is designed to outline five key factors of the Send Network, discussing why each is vital for church planting in our day. Whether you are an insider to the work of our network or just checking it out for the first time, we trust that this tool will provide you with an overview of the great work God is doing through the Send Network.

By God's grace, we will be a part of a church planting movement in our day. We labor in the hopes that the Send Network will play a role in that mighty work of God.

CHAPTER 1

ASSESSMENT

TIM WHEAT

“It’s either me or the church plant!”

Those are words that no church planter ever wants to hear coming from their spouse. However, in the wake of the church planting explosion, those tear-soaked words have found their way from the mouths (and hearts) of too many heart-broken and embittered spouses. Additionally, there have been others who have silently buried those caustic feelings deep inside, wishing only to return to the days before they ever planted.

Even one of those stories is one story too many, yet the church planting landscape has been littered with stories like that for many years. I know one of those stories and as the planter shared those words, all I could think was, “How did it come to this?” That was many years ago, and thankfully that couple survived...but the plant did not. As I walked with this couple through this season, the answer to my initial question became abundantly clear...they should have never planted to begin with! Or at least they should not have

planted when they did! In their preparation to plant, they were affirmed by a few who personally knew them, interviewed by just one person who did not and approved by others who simply read a report about them.

It is this story, and many other similar ones, that serves to fuel the conviction behind the current assessment process used by the Send Network. Through the Send Network assessment, we are trying to change the narrative of couples that find themselves in a similar place as my friends. The goal of the assessment process is not to see that more churches are planted, it is to see that more healthy churches are planted. A healthy church plant is the extension of a healthy church planter.

The first part of the Send Network assessment begins at home, where the planter and spouse complete an online inventory and questionnaire regarding their skills, personality and experience. This information is relayed to a group of assessors who have been trained to lead an assessment event with the church planting couple and several other potential church planters and wives. At the end of the two days of assessment in a church planting context, the assessment team creates a detailed report with clear recommendations for the Sending Church and the potential planting couple.

What sets the Send Network assessment apart from other assessments? The following factors characterize the assessment process, giving it both validity and value for those considering planting:

Time-tested – The assessment process has been in existence since 2011 and served hundreds of Sending Churches and potential planters.

Experientially-based – The assessment lasts two days in which the potential planter and spouse are interviewed, observed and taught through a variety of different experiences.

Relationally-driven – Unlike many assessments, a high value is placed on personal engagement and involvement in the experience with the potential planters.

Team-oriented – The assessment process will have anywhere from 6-10 people who are directly involved in observations and recommendations for the potential planters.

Multi-faceted – During the assessment retreat, the team of assessors are looking at nine characteristics in the life of the potential planting couple: calling, emotional/spiritual health, family dynamics, leadership, disciple-making, missional engagement, vision clarity, social skills and communication.

Developmentally-focused – Each potential planting couple receives a final report of the observations and recommendations from the assessment team. Each report is tailor-made to the couple and includes guidelines, suggestions and recommendations for further growth and development.

Contextually-sensitive – The assessment experience assesses the potential planter against the context and model of where and what he is planting. In other words, the assessment is not based on a specific model and not all contexts are the same. There are a variety of assessment centers with a variety of assessors from a variety of different models in a variety of different contexts.

The Send Network assessment provides a comprehensive and robust assessment that will serve churches and potential church planters and spouses in determining their level of readiness to plant. May the ultimatums of heart-broken spouses and exhausted planters be eliminated from the stories yet to be written for God's glory and His kingdom! For more information about assessments, please contact us at sendme@namb.net or the website, www.namb.net/Church-Planter-Assessment.

CHAPTER 2

ORIENTATION

MICAH MILLICAN

Church planting can be isolating. As Tim outlined in chapter 1, it is a hard calling—a calling where pastors and their families face great stress and personal pressure to start something from scratch. These realities are compounded by the financial challenges that come with moving to a new city and the family challenges that come from loving and leading in the midst of these changes.

Then you have the reality that planters are working to bring the gospel to bear on many who are content in their sin and see no need for the local church. All of the forces of hell seem to battle against the calling of a church planter. It is no doubt that planters serve on the front lines of ministry in an all-out war. This war certainly isn't a fight against flesh and blood, but it is a war nonetheless.

The Send Network recognizes these challenges and strives to come alongside planters in their work. It's unhealthy for planters to go at it alone, even when they are embracing their entrepreneurial spirit. Scripture warns against the dangers of isolation in Proverbs 18:1, "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out

against all sound judgment.” Simply put, there’s no place for the lone-ranger planter, or any other Christian for that matter. That’s one of the main reasons we instituted our Send Network Orientation.

But be honest, when you think of orientation, what comes to mind? Chances are, you envision a never-ending meeting in a stale conference room with a monotone speaker shuffling through a 100+ page binder of information you will likely forget before leaving the meeting. Orientation is the opportunity every company has to back up the truck and dump information. These meetings are often terrible, and we, at Send Network, get that.

For that reason, the Send Network Orientation is an altogether different sort of orientation. It’s about casting vision, not simply downloading information. During the three-day event at the North American Mission Board, we host new church planters from our 32 Send Cities to celebrate what God is doing in the cities. Along the way we seek to cast vision and equip our planters to embrace our network’s core values: brotherhood, multiplication and kingdom.

We truly believe that there is no limit to what God can do when you have a group of planters who relate to one another as brothers and who give themselves away to invest in God’s kingdom work, not simply to grow their churches. We cast this vision, but the planters are the only ones that make it reality.

At the Send Network Orientation, we have no desire for our planters to come and hear the NAMB staff talk for hours on end. We want them to see what God is already doing, so the entire orientation is driven by practitioners. We select the very best—often from

our Send Cities—to discuss the theology and practice behind the values of brotherhood, multiplication and kingdom. Planters need collaborative learning experiences—especially in the beginning stages—and the orientation provides just that. So you’ll never find rows of chairs; only round tables that foster shared learning.

Planters also need to relax and have some fun. So we carve out plenty of space for our planters to do just that through fun activities each night. The Send Network Orientation is life-giving and stress-free. Through the generous giving of Southern Baptists to the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®, we’re able to cover all of the expenses for each planter. It is good for a planter’s soul to not have to think about money for three days.

The Send Network Orientation offers planters what they ultimately long for—someone to be in the trenches with them. Our hope is that a church planter may come from Edmonton, Boston, or Salt Lake City feeling alone, but leave knowing they have 100+ brothers who are right there with them—some may even be right down the street.

We pray this event is catalytic for our planters—prompting each to return to their city and support other planters through prayer, accountability, friendship and encouragement. We pray that our planters refuse to believe that they’re the final link in the Great Commission chain, but actively and enthusiastically discover, develop and deploy missionaries from within their churches to continue the work. And lastly, we desire that our planters would want more than to be the “coolest” church on the street, but to plant a church that makes a real and lasting difference in their community. All for

the glory of God!

This isn't just another trendy church planter gathering, but an experience of what could be and should be through the shared brotherhood of our church planters. We hope this event becomes a milestone in the life of every Send Network planter, as they enter into a family that is "for them." Church planters are our heroes, and we consider it a high honor to do everything we can to bless, encourage and equip them to fulfill God's calling on their lives.

The best part of the Send Network Orientation is the reminder for each planter that they're not alone. We stand next to them, shoulder-to-shoulder, partnering together to see people made new through the life-changing message of the gospel.

CHAPTER 3

TRAINING

MAC LAKE

The greatest church planter that ever lived wrote “I laid a foundation like a wise and master builder...” Ever-ready to confess his inadequacy, Paul changes tact in the letter to the Corinthians and stated he had planted with competency. In other words, Paul tells them that when it came to church planting, he was good at it. Who could deny it?

False humility is of no value when you’re in a mentorship role to church planters who daily put their security, families and reputation on the line by risking it all for kingdom expansion. When you’re looking for a mentor, you want to know that he’s planted successfully and lived to tell the tale. Paul had his share of failures too, as evidenced by the mess Galatia was in after his first missionary journey. It’s at this very point that Paul’s genius truly shone through.

Paul learned from his mistakes. Sometimes, competency is gained from the failures that we’ve endured as well as the successes. All golf coaches, boxing trainers and sensei’s know that competency is something that can be built in those that are willing to learn from

the wisdom of those that have gone before them.

Everyone needs a Paul, and the Send Network Church Planter training tracks (BLVD and Multiply) don't merely teach methods, they provide mentorship.

The curriculum itself is laid out over several months, where planters meet with other planters in cohorts. Whereas much training is rigidly set on teaching methods, the Send Network training is planter-centric, focusing on the competencies that all planters need developed within them across all cultural contexts, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds and models.

These competencies didn't just come out of nowhere either. They're rooted in reality—grounded in the trenches of everyday church planting.

We can offer this kind of training because we have talked to planters in the trenches. We walked beside, and interviewed church planters who were successful at reaching their communities with the gospel and witnessing transformation through their church plants. As I heard story-after-story, I began to trace certain patterns. The training emerged out of those talks, from church planters on the ground, and the team was able to crystalize the core characteristics of successful church planting.

The focus of the Send Network training isn't on your church. It's on you, as a church planter. We train you to be the kind of planter who can assess the makeup of your community and develop a missional engagement strategy. We also train you to develop bold faith that takes prayerful risk. You'll learn how to cast a clear and compelling vision. Above all, we trace all of our training back to qualities

that leaders in the Bible exhibited and had developed in themselves, so that they can be developed in you before you hit the field.

We can't wait to see these traits developed in you, because like Paul developed Timothy and Jesus developed the twelve, the Send Network doesn't treat you like a tool. It treats you like a living, breathing, human being with a soul, a heart, a mind, a family, and yes, even a church plant. You're so much more than just a number, or a means to plant more churches. You're somebody for whom Christ died, and in whom He deposited Himself into when He indwelt you with His Holy Spirit. Send Network training seeks to continue to see you poured into through the lives of others. The entire time you train, you'll be interacting with your trainer, cohort of fellow planters and a coach, or sending pastor. In the end, the Send Network training is relational, because church planting itself is relational, just as God Himself is a relational being.

We expect our training to be some of the best on the planet. Church planters deserve it. We are always improving and re-examining ourselves in order to deliver the best we possibly can, and to make sure we are always on the cutting edge. Our trainers make the training what it is, and we train them rigorously before allowing them to lead a cohort.

When you walk into a cohort, you know that you've kissed traditional planter training goodbye. Everything from start to finish is meant to communicate something, and in every session there is non-stop interaction, relational depth and gospel centrality. You will build lasting, and strategic relationships during these six to eight months, and most of all, you'll develop the necessary competency

to plant by learning from experienced church planters as they share their own failures and successes.

CHAPTER 4

COACHING

DINO SENESI

Heather Bond, the wife of a church planter, once said, “coaching is like noise-canceling headphones; it takes all those voices, internal and external, in Matthew’s (her husband) life and helps him discern which one is the Holy Spirit’s.”

Healthy church plants are usually resourced by a crowd of helpers and encouragers. The Send Network is here to serve and equip church planters and their families in the same way through coaching.

Send Network church planter coaches provide the one-on-one support and encouragement church planters need. Great coaches challenge and encourage; they cheer and warn. But what they never do is lose interest or go away. Great coaches abide with church planters.

Below are three stories that show the value of a great coach:

Buff and Cissy McNickle moved from Florida to Atlantic City, New Jersey, to plant Great Falls Church in 2013. Buff described an immediate return on his time being coached:

“I quickly realized this wasn’t another task or burden, but truly a

blessing if done well and consistently for a season. My coach helped me truly know what it means to walk in step with the Spirit. Our coaching sessions helped me think about, track and take the necessary steps to live out the mission of God in my church plant and everyday life. The ability to draw out my thoughts and move them forward to action has helped me tremendously.”

Planters are understandably reluctant to add to their daunting to-do list. But once they experience the value of great coaching, they want more. **Coaches help planters handle transitions and create action.**

JD and Natalie Mangrum recently moved to Boston to plant their second church. During his first church plant, JD was coached by Ed Cerny, a professional coach, former marketing professor and leader in two church plants. Here is JD’s perspective on how Ed helped him:

“Ed Cerny was a great coach because he spoke wisdom and pointed me to books or habits. But even more, he showed me what a life of faith looks like. He cared for me over and over again. At the birth of my children, the death of my father, every birthday and anniversary, long after the formal coaching process concluded, Ed would write, call, or email to encourage. In a season of wanting answers, Ed provided questions. Rather than challenging me to get answers from someone else’s victories, he asked the right questions so I would chart my own course. He helped me learn that what God called me to do, He would equip me to do.”

JD received more than a planting coach. He received a prayer warrior and cheerleader for life. **Coaches help planters make dis-**

coveries and face challenges.

Matthew and Heather Bond moved from Fort Worth, Texas, to Vancouver Island, British Columbia, four years ago to plant Ekklesia Community Church.

Heather was trained as a coach through the Send Network at the same time as Matthew. She learned how God could use coaching and soon experienced it as well. Heather wrote, “Coaching is a lifeline for my husband as a church planter—and it’s a lifeline for our marriage, too.”

Matthew trains and assigns coaches to planters as part of the Send Network and Send Vancouver. Heather remains excited about how God helps Matthew through his coach:

“Coaching draws my husband back to God’s plan, power and ability to accomplish His will. It helps him fight the spiritual battle of low self-esteem and low productivity by focusing his attention on what God wants him to do next.”

Everything we do in the Send Network is built on the belief that no planter should plant alone. Bound by a biblical ethic to love, support and equip families God sends, we abide with them through wins and losses. Affirmation and celebration are offered when they lead well. Grace and comfort are extended when they don’t.

Coaches help planters hear God and gain focus. Coaching is a vehicle to help planters pursue their unique kingdom assignment. All of this is part of our overarching purpose to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

CHAPTER 5

CARE

MICAH MILLICAN

At the North American Mission Board (NAMB), our goal is to see 1,200 churches planted every year. This is just a numerical goal, though. We desire to plant churches that are pastored by healthy men who are leading healthy families. We know that the long-term health of the church is predicated on the health of the pastor and his family. The five marks of the Send Network outlined in this book—assessment, orientation, training, coaching and care—are designed to foster a culture of health in our church planters, their families and the churches they plant.

Historically, church planting has fostered isolation, discouragement, unrealistic expectations and financial hardships. Send Network's Planter Care Ministry wants to address these trends and bring needed support to the planter and his family. Southern Baptists love their missionaries, and the Send Network is committed to walking alongside our church planters and offering practical care, love and support.

WE WANT TO ENCOURAGE AND BLESS PLANTERS

We desire that all Southern Baptist church planters and their families would be blessed through our no-strings-attached approach to encouragement. We truly believe that this investment will foster health as these men and women do the hard work of impacting their cities with the gospel of Jesus. Any Southern Baptist church planter whose church is less than five years of age can benefit from this ministry.

Some of the blessings a planter can expect include:

- Ongoing prayer support
- Phone calls and handwritten notes of encouragement
- Gifts on their birthdays and anniversaries
- Free books, blogs and e-books to equip them as they serve
- Invitations to events in their city and region
- Other surprises throughout the year

Our desire is that planters would receive things they actually want—gifts that are life-giving for them and their families. We also want them to feel a sense of belonging, or better yet, a true experience of brotherhood.

The Planter Care Ministry is dedicated to actually knowing our church planters—not just their names and church names, but really knowing the church planter and his family. We want to cultivate a relationship with our planters. We want to be there in the peaks and valleys—to pray with and walk through the tough situations and celebrate the wins and successes. We want planters to feel that we

at the North American Mission Board are part of their journey, and that they are not alone. While we are thankful for the number of people who come to Christ through our church plants, we are first and foremost thankful for the leaders who give of their time and energy to make these churches a reality.

The beauty of the Send Network's organization is that we can respond immediately when something happens to one of our planters. We genuinely want planters to know they are a part of a network that cares for them, whether that means last minute plane tickets to a funeral of a close family member, extra support through a family illness, help with other unexpected expenses, or counseling during difficult times.

The health of a planter is paramount in church planting. For that reason, we see this ministry as being absolutely critical to the Send Network strategy. This ministry undergirds everything Southern Baptists are doing to push back lostness by planting healthy, evangelistic churches.

Learn more about joining this network at <https://www.namb.net/church-planter-care-development>.