

The Pastor/ Elder Leadership Team!

SeLD 327

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The effectiveness of the structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization is determined by specialized teams being able to work harmoniously. One team that is pivotal to the church's effectiveness is the Pastor/Elder Leadership Team. This construct is critical since most pastors manage Districts with several churches. Each local Church operates with shared leadership, with the pastor and elder(s) working together to guarantee spiritual leadership, membership nurture, protection from predators and spurious doctrines, and the fulfilment of the mission of the church.

Meaning of Team:

The dynamics that hold teams together are invisible and have a direct effect on the outcomes within the Church. "A team is a group of people with a full set of complementary skills that are required to complete a task, job, or project. Team members operate with a high degree of interdependence; shared authority and responsibility for self-management; are accountable for the collective performance; and work toward a common goal and shared rewards. A team becomes more than just a collection of people when a strong sense of mutual commitment creates synergy, thus generating performance greater than the sum of the performance of its individual members" (Businessdictionary.com).

Bruce Tuckman on Team Development:

When teams and other groups of people come together, they typically go through a number of developmental stages. This process can take a few days or stretch over a much longer period. It can easily take up to six months for a team to settle down. Bruce Tuckman explains that it is common for a team that is formed to go through the stages of storming, norming, and then performing.

Forming:

Forming happens when people first come together. They are initially polite and the conversation is mostly exploratory, finding out about one another and the work that is to

be done. People here are typically in the 'honeymoon' period and are quite excited about the newness and potential of being in the team.

MANAGING FORMING:

Managing the 'form' stage is best done by introducing people to one another and ensuring the quiet ones are drawn out and not left out. Rituals may be used to introduce people and get them engaged. The work to be done needs to be communicated in a way that helps the team understand what needs to be achieved without overwhelming them with detail.

Storming:

As the initial politeness fades, people start to get more into the work and their roles and may start to argue about things that were left unsaid or not realized when they first met.

Storming can be fiercer if one or more conditions exist:

- If the pastor and elder are choleric in their temperament.
- Unclear formal roles
- Unclear objectives

Managing Storming:

The Pastor needs to assert his role and help draw out and resolve differences that might otherwise bubble along under the surface, causing continuing team cohesion problems.

Storming can also be reduced by clarifying work goals and individual role and objectives. When people know what individual success means, they become more focused.

Team rules such as collaboration and sharing may also start to be developed here, continuing into the next stage of developing group norms. At the very least, storming gives a clear indication as to why such rules are needed!

Norming:

As roles and personal conflicts are sorted out, the focus turns towards the task and what needs to be done. Objectives are clarified and the detail of work is laid out. Feeling more as a team, people start to help one another more.

Socially, group rules develop and are refined. They begin to feel like they are members of the same team and form a clear sense of identity.

Managing Norming:

Managing the process of norming requires a balanced focus on people and work.

Performing:

Finally, a steady state is achieved, where the team reaches an optimal level of performance. A good team will feel like a happy family.

Managing Performing:

Care needs to be taken to sustain an effective task-people balance as it is easy to slip into a happy and lower-performing family or to forget the people in an ever-increasing focus on the task at hand.

Principles and Practices that Unite the Pastor/Elder Team:

This seminar considers the principles and practices that glue together effective pastor and elder teams. They include; an understanding of shared leadership within the context of the pastor and the elder, purpose of Church leadership, trust, listening, collective decision making, effective communication, harmony, respect and flexibility.

This seminar is ideal for pastors who want to enhance their working relationship with their elders; it is helpful for elders to enhance their leadership practice and partnership; and is also recommended for persons who will like to provide leadership within the S.D.A. organization.

Relationship Between The Pastor and Elder: A Shared Leadership:

“In a case where the Conference/Mission/Field Committee assigns an ordained/commissioned minister to labor as a pastor of a church, he/she should be considered as the ranking officer, and the local elder as his/her assistant. Their work is closely related; they should therefore work together harmoniously. The minister should not gather to himself/herself all lines of responsibility, but should share these with the local elder and other officers. The minister serving the church regularly as pastor acts as the chairman of the church board. There may be circumstances, however, when it would be advisable for the elder to act in this capacity.

The pastoral work of the church should be shared by both. The elder should, in counsel with the minister, assist in the pastoral responsibility, which includes visiting the church members, ministering to the sick, arranging and leading out in anointing services and child dedication, and encouraging those who are disheartened. Too much emphasis cannot be placed on this part of an elder's work, who as an under-shepherd should exercise a constant vigilance over the flock" (Church Manual, pages 49, 50).

Ministers and Elders are to Follow Christ's Example:

"God's ministers must come into close companionship with Christ, and follow His example in all things — in purity of life, in self-denial, in benevolence, in diligence, in perseverance. To win souls to the kingdom of God must be their first consideration. With sorrow for sin and with patient love, they must work as Christ worked, putting forth determined, unceasing effort" (GW, page 31).

Purpose of Church Leadership:

- **To Fulfill the Commission of the Church:**

Jesus has given a clear commission to the church that the leadership must supervise and operationalize. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20).

- **Feed the Flock:**

The Apostle Peter gives guidance in this regard: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1Peter 5:1-4).

- **Feed the Flock:**

The Apostle Paul gives another dimension of the leaders' responsibility: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:28-32).

- **Foster Church Growth and Unity through the Development and Use of Spiritual Gifts:**

"But unto everyone is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.... And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:7,8, 11-14).

Qualities Needed by Pastor and Elder:

If the pastor/elder team is to function faithfully, futuristically, effectively, and efficaciously, there must be the development and demonstration of qualities that build up rather than break down their relationship. Some of these are:

- **Trust:** "Firm belief in the reliability, truthfulness, ability, or strength of someone."

- **Active Listening:** “The ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process. Effective listening is a skill that underpins all positive human relationships.”
- **Collective Decision-making:** “A collective activity wherein several persons interact to find out the solution to a given statement or problem.”
- **Effective Communication:** “Verbal speech or other methods of relaying information that get a point across. An example of effective communication is when the person who you are talking to listens actively, absorbs your point and understands it.”
- **Harmony:** “Two people walking in unison for the common good, despite the differences that may have existed before.”
- **Respect:** “A feeling of deep admiration for someone because of his/her abilities, qualities, position, or achievement.”
- **Flexibility:** “The ability to change or be changed easily according to the situation, while not violating any preestablished principle.”

Conclusion: The Pastor and Elder may be very gifted and talented, and may be able to achieve great feats. But operating singly, the results will come fast, but working together the results will go far. Michael Jordan of NBA Basketball fame, said, “Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships.” May God be praised with your great work as the Pastoral/Eldership Team.