

The importance of the Elders in the leadership structure of the organization, and how they relate to the field, and the other bodies of the local church.





# ELDER

(זקן, *zaqen*; πρεσβύτερος, *presbyteros*). Hebrew: *zaquén*, translated into Greek: *presbyteros*, Latin: *presbyter*, Spanish: *presbítero*. In ancient cultures they were revered and observed Gen 50: 7; Num 22: 7.<sup>1</sup>

(זקן, *zaqen* πρεσβύτερος, *presbyterian*), designated an elderly person or a person in authority.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Diccionario Bíblico Digital, Grupo C Service & Design Ltda., Colombia, 2003

<sup>2</sup> Victor, W. M. (2016). [Elder](#). En J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

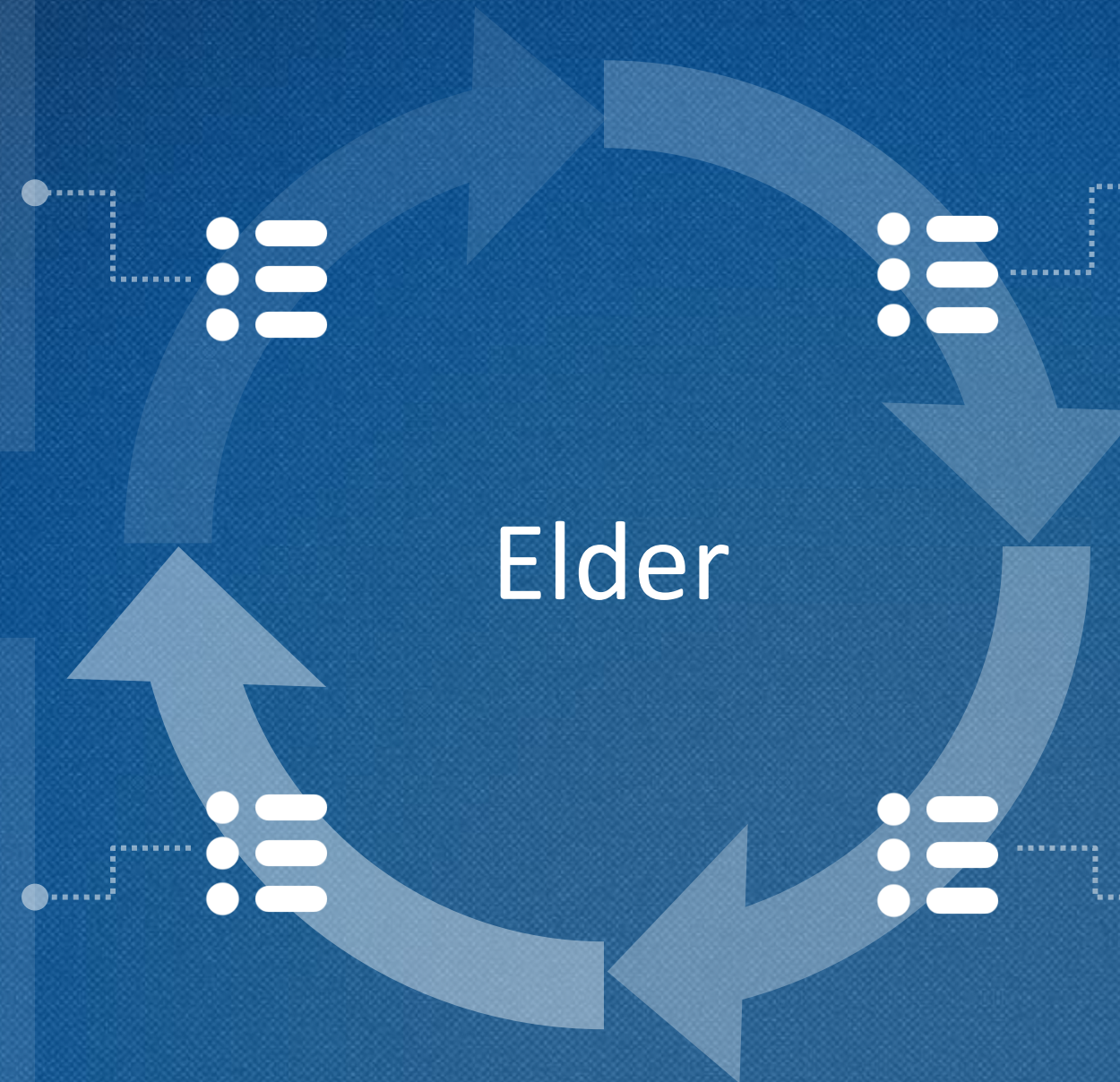


# Elder In The Old Testament

Name used in the O T denotes a person dressed in authority and entitled to respect and reverence (Genesis 50: 7). It denoted a political office (Num. 22: 7). The "elders of Israel" had a rank among the people indicative of authority. <sup>3</sup>

Cornerstone of the social and political fabric where the patriarchal system existed, The highest authority of the tribe.

<sup>5</sup>



In O T it referred to a judge in civil and religious society.

Appointed by virtue of his age, at the head of a tribe (1 Kings 8:1-3; Judg. 8:14, 16).

By having the position of head of a tribe or of the largest families, the elder had the authority of a prince. <sup>4</sup>

Common practice to designate Elders = authority

Midianites and Moabites (Num. 22:4, 7), organized into tribes, had elders.

Each city had its own group of elders with certain civil and religious responsibilities (cf. Exod. 12:21; Deut. 19:11,12; Ruth 4:2,4,9,11, etc.), and in some cases they had to answer for the entire city (cf. Deut. 21:1-9).

<sup>3</sup> Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Easton's Bible dictionary*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

<sup>4</sup> Ventura, S. V. (1985). In *Nuevo diccionario biblico ilustrado* (pp. 56–57). TERRASSA (Barcelona): Editorial CLIE.

<sup>5</sup> Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Easton's Bible dictionary*. New York: Harper & Brothers.



# Elder In The Old Testament

The appointment of the Elderly generally designates senior officials ( Gen. 50:7.) They ruled the people (Deut. 27:1; Ekd. 10:8); represented the nation in its own transactions (Ex. 3:18; Judges 11:5–11; 1 S. 8:4); when a guest was to be honored (Ex. 18:12); celebrate an alliance (2 S. 5:3), o hold religious ceremonies (Lv. 4:13–15; Jos. 7:6.)



# Elder In The Old Testament

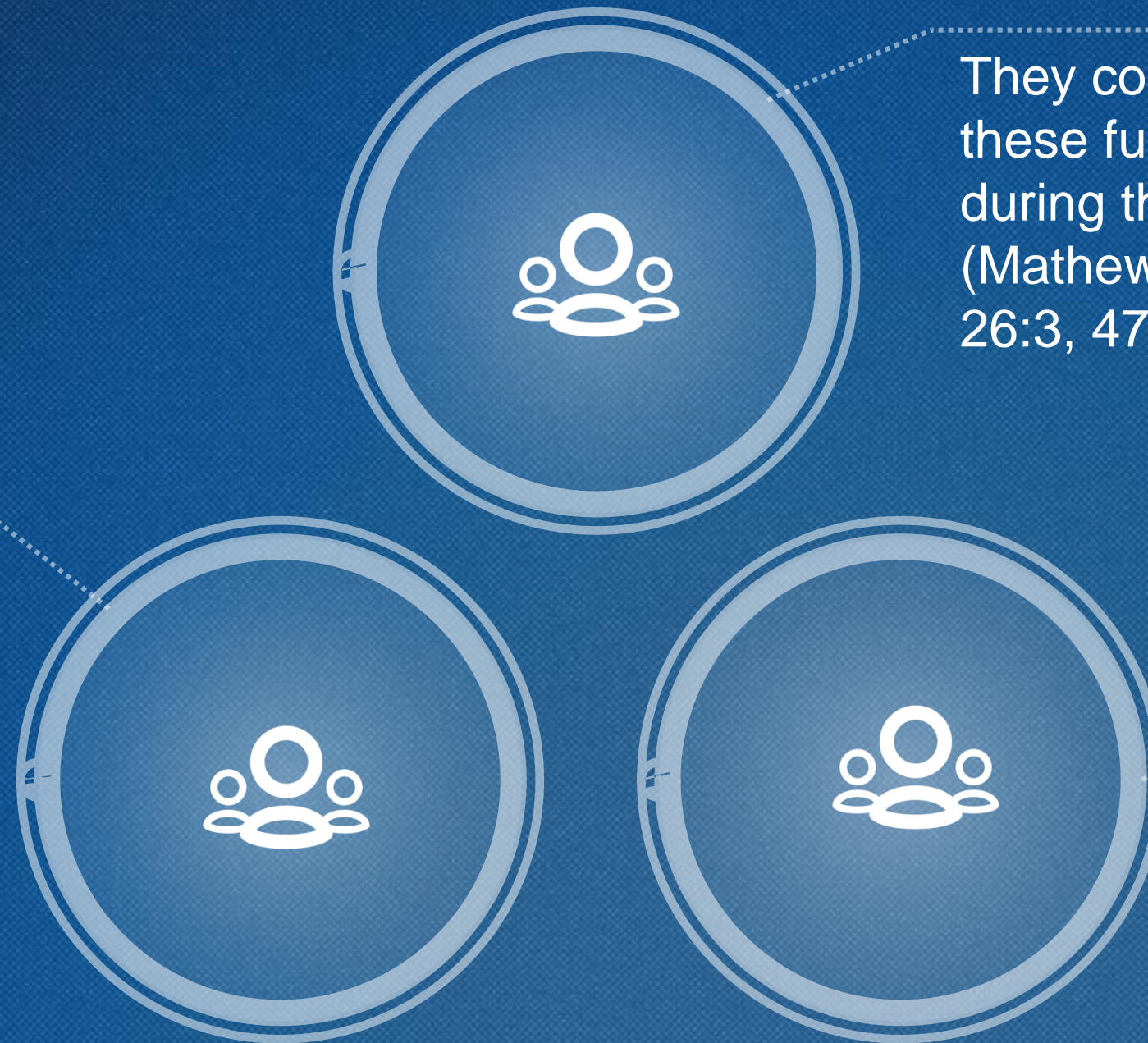
A group of 70 elders helped Moses rule the Israelites (Num. 11:16-24). Each city had its own elders, who were the heads of the local families, and who exercised civil and religious authority (Deut. 3:14). 19:12; 21:2; Ruth 4:2-11; I Sam. 11:3; Ez. 10:14).

"In the Mosaic system, the appointment of Elder was equivalent to the title of current senator. Elders, with delegated powers, were authorized to act for their constituents, Deut. 1:13, 15." <sup>6</sup>



# The transition of the role of the Elders

From the Old to the New Testament



The function and title of Elder was transmitted from the earliest times.

In other words, the office of Elder is the only essential permanent office of the church under any dispensation

They continued to exercise these functions in Judea during the Roman occupation (Mathew 15:2; 9:23 PM; 26:3, 47).

The "elders" of the New Testament church were the "shepherds" (Eph. 4:11), "bishops or overseers" (Acts 20:28), "leaders" and "rulers" (Heb. 13: 7; 1 Thess. 5:12) of the flock.

In N. T., the bishop and the priest, titles granted to the same Christian church officer. One who is called a priest or elder because of his age or importance is also called a bishop or overseer with reference to his duty (Titus 1: 5-7; Acts 20: 17-28; Phil. 1: 1). <sup>7</sup>



# Elder In the New Testament



"Elder" also refers to a leadership position in synagogues and churches. <sup>8</sup>

The terms *elder* and *episcopates* (meaning overseer or bishop) were interchangeable ( Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7), but they were not entirely synonymous. The term *elder* (presbyter) denotes the dignity of his function, while episcope denotes those duties he performed.

Victor, W. M. (2016). [Elder](#). En J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



# Elder In the New Testament

The distinction between two categories of ministry (that of an elder and that of a bishop) dates back to the second century. In 44 A.D., we find elders in the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30). During his first missionary journey, Paul appointed elders in every church (14:23). In fact, the elders in the churches of the Gentiles, as far as the NT shows us, were always appointed by irreplaceable apostolic authority, either exercised personally or expressly delegated to certain persons (1 Tim. 3:1–15; Titus 1:5.) <sup>9</sup>

They continued to minister in the communities of Christians of Jewish origin (James 5:14; 1 P. 5:1). It is clear that the dignity of the elder in the Christian church corresponded to that of the elder among the Jews.



# Elder In the New Testament

They were the bishops or overseers of the local churches (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5), and their function was to care for the spiritual state of the congregation, exercising discipline, teaching (1 Tim. 3:5; 5:17; Tit. 1:9; James 5:14; 1 P. 5:1–4; Acts 1:17 PM).

There were several bishops or overseers in the local church (Phil. 1:1), also called old people (Acts. 11:30). No reference is made to any distinction of function between them. Within the Christian church of apostolic times, as in the synagogue, preaching was not an essential function of the elders; it was not reserved to them in an exclusive way. As shepherds of the flock, the elders were to instruct well and be fit to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ventura, S. V. (1985). In [\*Nuevo diccionario biblico ilustrado\*](#) (pp. 56–57). TERRASSA (Barcelona): Editorial CLIE.



# Elder In the New Testament

When Peter wrote to the churches of Asia Minor (1Peter 1:1), he admonished the elders to care for those under their supervision, not by force but voluntarily; not to fulfill their position for personal gain or with a dominant attitude (5:1-4).

Some of their functions were to preach and teach (1 Titus 5:17), to shepherd (Acts 20:28), to administer (Titus 1:6-9), anointing the sick and pray for them (James 5:14, 15) Organization based on the Spirit of Prophecy



# The Elder in the Adventist Church



## The Adventist church

it restores the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers, contrary to the medieval tradition where the clergy totally directed the church. The prominent role of the elder returned to the scene of leadership in the local church.



## In 1854 and 1855,

Joseph Bates and J.B. Frisbie wrote about two types of local leaders, those who traveled and those who took pastoral care of a church.



## In the year 1861

Adventist pioneers J.N. Loughborough, Moses Hull, and M.E. Cornell studied elders and deacons. They concluded that they were clearly permitted by Scripture and that this was nothing new.



## In the year 1874,

G.I. Butler wrote that the elder as leader was the principal in the church, yet his authority to decide was limited, because it was the church that assumed this function.



## In 1875 ;

The elder would visit members, look for absentees.  
In the absence of the evangelist, he would baptize and celebrate the rite of humility and Holy Communion, anoint the sick and convene the church to decide the best administration in its different departments and to fulfill its objectives.



## Currently,

"In the absence of the pastor, the elders are responsible for leading the church spiritually, and by precept and example should see to it that the church develops an ever deeper and fuller Christian experience.



# Four forms of government of the different churches



**Papal,**  
the pope has supreme  
authority



**Congregational,**  
where total authority within  
their domain rests with the  
local congregations.



**Episcopal,**  
authority rests with the  
bishops of the church



**Representative,**  
Authority rests with the  
members. Planning and  
coordination takes place at  
other levels. <sup>12</sup>



“The governance system of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is representative, recognizing that the authority of the church emanates from its members and is expressed through duly elected representatives at each organizational level, with managerial responsibility delegated to representative bodies and leaders for the governance of the church at each level.”



# Four levels of church organization

The current organizational system of the Church has resulted from a growing theological understanding of mission, increased membership and geographic expansion of the Church. In 1863 representatives of the associations met to organize the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Church Manual (Colombia: Asociación Publicadora Interamericana, 2015), 14.





# Four levels of church organization<sup>15</sup>

Local Church:

/ Local Conference

Union Conference or Union  
Mission

General Conference



A group of believers with spiritual maturity and leadership gifts. Elects its delegates to elect its Conference's representatives



Organized body of churches in a state, province, territory.



Body of Conferences or Missions within a larger territory. This level is made up of two or more Conferences.



Larger organizational unit. It groups together the Unions



“There are several levels within the organization of the Church, which start from the individual believer and reach out to the worldwide organization of the work. Groups of members at each of these levels periodically hold formal administrative sessions called Constituent Meetings or Congresses. (Usually the Constituent Meeting or Congress of a local church is called an Administrative Meeting). In the structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, no organization can determine its own status, nor can it function as if it had no obligation to the rest of the worldwide church family. 16



# The elders



## *Spiritual leadership.*

Strong spiritual leaders, good reputation in church and community.

In the absence of the pastor, responsible for leading the church spiritually See to it that the church develops a deep and full Christian experience.

Able to lead the services of the church and to be prepared to minister in word and doctrine when the assigned pastor is not available. <sup>17</sup>



## *Time of service*

They can be re-elected. They do not serve indefinitely. The church is not obliged to re-elect them. After the election of new elders, the former elders no longer officiate as elders, but may be elected to any other office in the church.<sup>18</sup>



## *Elder ordination*

Election to elderhood does not qualify you to act as an elder. It requires ordination to exercise authority. In the interval between the election and ordination, the elected one may act as a leader, but may not administer the rites. <sup>19</sup>



## *Relationship with the pastor.*

The pastor, or senior pastor, should be regarded as the senior leader, the elders as assistants. Since the functions of all the elders are closely related, they should act in harmony. <sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Asociación of Seventh-day Adventists, Church Manual (Colombia: Asociación Publicadora Interamericana, 2015), 65.

<sup>18</sup>Asociación General, *Manual de Iglesia*, 65.

<sup>19</sup>Asociación General, *Manual de Iglesia*, 65.

<sup>20</sup>Asociación General, *Manual de Iglesia*, 66.



# The elders

## The work of the elders is local.



Authority and functions limited to the church that elected him. The conference cannot confer prerogatives as an elder in other congregations. <sup>21</sup>

## The elder and the baptismal ceremony.



In the absence of an ordained minister, the elder shall request the president of the conference to make provision for baptism. An elder may not officiate at a baptismal ceremony without first obtaining permission from the president of the association. <sup>23</sup>

## The elder and church meetings.



Under the direction of the pastor as in his absence, he is responsible for the services of the church, or arranges for someone to conduct them. The pastor presides over administrative meetings. In the absence of the pastor, and with the approval of the pastor or the conference president, the elder shall serve as chairperson. <sup>22</sup>

## The Elder and Marriages



In ceremony, the encouragements, vows, and declaration of marriage are made by an ordained minister. An elder may present the sermon, pray, or impart the blessing. <sup>24</sup>



# The Elder and Faithfulness in Tithing.25

Example:

Preaching

Personal contact

- Their faithfulness in tithing can motivate members to return a faithful tithe to the Lord.

- Elders can encourage tithing by publicly presenting what the Scriptures say about the privilege and responsibility of stewardship

- Elders can encourage tithing through prudent and constructive personal contact with members.



# Encouraging Bible study, prayer and a relationship with Christ 26



## Responsible for:

As a spiritual leader, the elder is responsible for encouraging church members to develop a personal relationship with Christ by reinforcing their habits of personal Bible study and prayer.



## Model

The elder should model commitment to Bible study and prayer



## Prayer and support

A personal and effective prayer life of each member, supporting all the ministries and programs of the local church, will enhance the mission of the church.

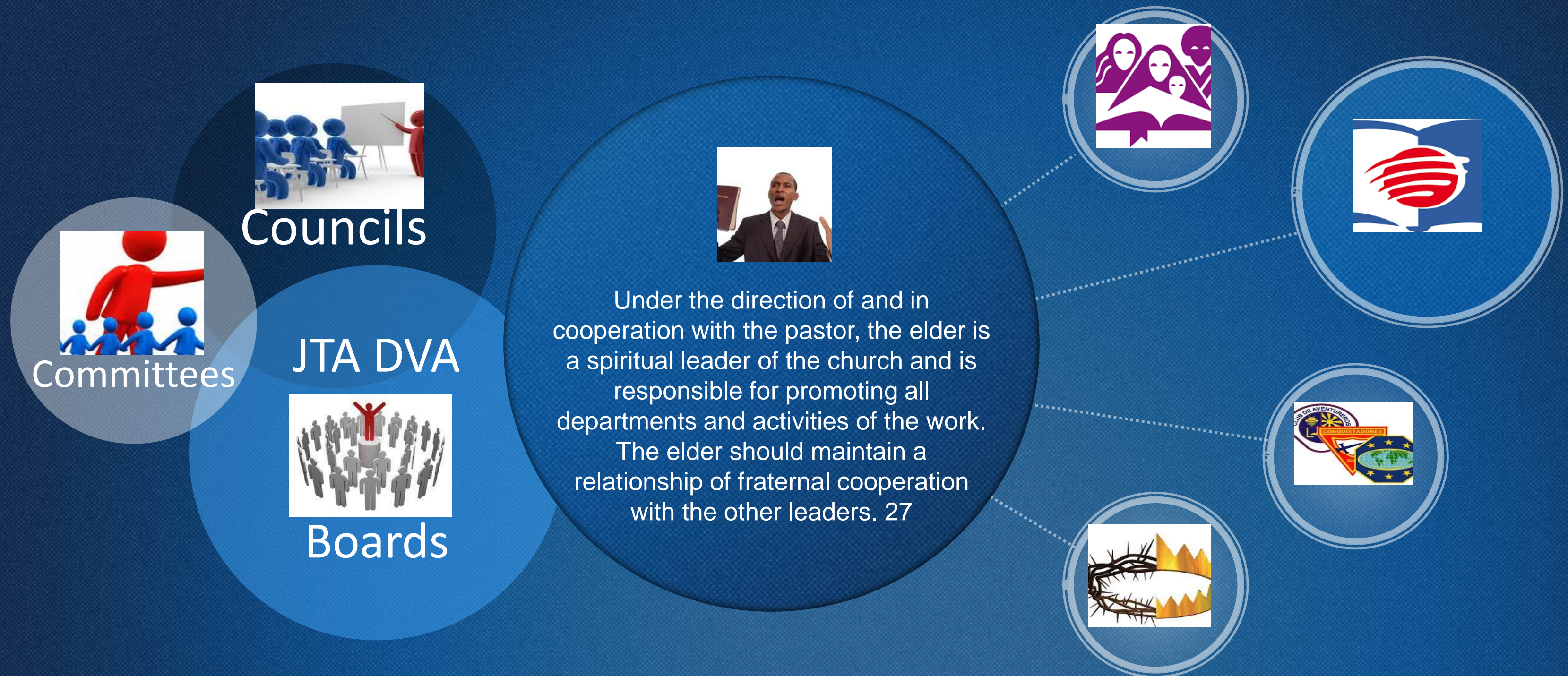


## Development

The elder may request the board to appoint a committee to assist him or her in this task of development and encouragement.



# Supporting all aspects of the work.





# Cooperation with the conference



## Collaborate with...

It is the duty of the elders and all church officers to cooperate with the administrators and directors of the association departments in the promotion and development of all approved plans



## promote

Promote all programs and activities of the local church



## Inform

They should keep members informed of all regular and special offerings



## Encourage and support

Encourage all leaders to support the plans and agreements



# The elders

## Local church leaders and organizations

- ❑ The elder must act in close cooperation with the treasurer and ensure that all conference funds are forwarded to the association treasurer in a timely manner within the time limits set by the conference. The elder should personally see that the church secretary's report is sent promptly to the conference secretary at the end of each quarter. <sup>29</sup>

## The elder and the promotion of missionary work.

- ❑ The elder should promote the work of the missions throughout the world by making a careful study of that work and by encouraging members to support it individually. His kindness and prudence will encourage the generosity of the members, both in the regular services of the church and in the Sabbath School.<sup>30</sup>

## The limits of the authority of the elder

- ❑ No Elder Has Authority to Admit or Exclude Members. This can be done only by a church vote. Only the board can recommend that the church approve by vote the admission or exclusion of a member. <sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Asociación of Seventh-day Adventists, Church Manual (Colombia: Asociación Publicadora Interamericana, 2015) , 73.

<sup>30</sup>Asociación General, *Manual de*, 69.

<sup>31</sup>Asociación General, *Manual de*, 70.



# Finally...

## 5 Consejos para los líderes y los jóvenes

1 Y ahora, una palabra para ustedes los ancianos en las iglesias. También soy un anciano y testigo de los sufrimientos de Cristo. Y yo también voy a participar de su gloria cuando él sea revelado a todo el mundo. Como anciano igual que ustedes, les ruego:

2 cuiden del rebaño que Dios les ha encomendado. Háganlo con gusto, no de mala gana ni por el beneficio personal que puedan obtener de ello, sino porque están deseosos de servir a Dios.

3 No abusen de la autoridad que tienen sobre los que están a su cargo, sino guíenlos con su buen ejemplo.

4 Así, cuando venga el Gran Pastor, recibirán una corona de gloria y honor eternos.

5 Del mismo modo, ustedes hombres más jóvenes tienen que aceptar la autoridad de los ancianos. Y todos sírvanse unos a otros con humildad, porque «Dios se opone a los orgullosos pero muestra su favor a los humildes».







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