



Presbytery of Southeastern Illinois

Clerk Talk

The Stated Clerk's presentation at the PSEI Stated Meeting.

Written by Rev. Cindy Bean

Almost a year ago we learned at the 223rd General Assembly just how crucial moderators of session are supposed to be to the life of the presbytery. Last year, this Presbytery presented an overture to the General Assembly asking that a portion of the Book of Order that was in place prior to 2011 be restored thereby allowing a moderator of session to appoint a Ruling Elder to moderate when the pastoral leader suddenly is unable to do so. The representative from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution serving the committee that heard our overture made it clear that the Moderators of session are the voice and presence of the Presbytery and that sessions cannot meet without that. Now, we can argue about whether we agree with that interpretation, but the

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absolute truth is that Moderators of session are the MVP's of the Presbytery. Our success or failure in being a vital, educated, well-ordered, passionate, flexible, creative Presbytery that handles conflict well and openly while staying in relationship and while effectively proclaiming the good news, depends on the leadership of the Moderators.

Moderators must love teaching, empowering, correcting, and cheering on their sessions. And this is especially important when a moderator is appointed to serve a congregation without a regular pastoral leader or who have a pastoral leader who is not PC(USA) and doesn't respect the way that God is calling us to live out our faith.

Let us take a moment to honor and thank those who are serving as Moderators for the congregations that they serve as the pastoral leader. Please stand.

Let us take a moment to honor and thank those who supervise Commissioned Pastors and Ruling Elders who serve as pastoral leaders. Please stand.

Let us give a round of thanks to those who moderate a session beyond the one that pays their salary.

And how many of you moderate more than two sessions? Thank you for your service. Both David McNabb and Matthew Froeschle moderate four sessions each and we thank you for your work. Surely, we can some other volunteers and reduce their load.

Please know that we have 79 congregations, but 35 of those congregations have appointed moderators and 7 more have supervisors. 42 moderator appointments. That is over half of the churches in our Presbytery who need to

have moderators appointed for them who do not lead worship in these congregations weekly. Many of the moderators will see that session quarterly and the congregation once a year. We need more Teaching Elders to come forward to help lead these congregations. And when you do, please know that you will have a tremendous amount of work to do educating them about what it means to be Presbyterian. You will face resistance and conflict when you teach them that being Presbyterian means that we believe in infant baptism and that women must be on session as well as men.

Remember, I said that we have 35 churches who have appointed moderators at the moment. And there are another 7 whose pastoral leader has a supervisor appointed for them. When I tell you that in tracking Presbytery meeting attendance since 2014 during which time we had 22 meetings, would you be shocked to learn that 36 congregations attended only 1 or 0 meetings in that time? 27 sessions didn't have a commissioner attend a single meeting. 9 sessions had a commissioner at one meeting. How connected do you think those congregations are to PSEI? To the PC(USA)? The best way to change this is through the careful, loving and persistent work of our Moderators. Too few people are serving way too many churches and they need our help to serve effectively and to avoid burnout. Please, prayerfully consider dedicating a portion of your time, or supporting your pastor so that she or he can make the commitment of serving one of these congregations with the energy, intelligence, imagination, and love that is needed.