



*Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.”*

- Matthew 20:25-26

Dear Friends,

At our upcoming stated meeting on May 19, the presbytery will elect a new Moderator and Vice Moderator, who will be installed in September. I wanted to take a little bit of time to talk about the role of a moderator in our system.

In my third year as a pastor, one of the elders at the church I served told me he had been nominated to serve as presbytery moderator and asked what I thought. I said I was pleased—he was and is a man of deep faith and wisdom, had been active in the presbytery, and I knew he would bring many valuable gifts to the role. “No, no,” he said, “what do you think about me being your boss?” I laughed at this, but then I realized he was serious, and so I explained that he wasn’t being invited to serve as a bishop with authority over pastors, that he wouldn’t be a “boss,” but rather a colleague in the ministry of the presbytery.

A moderator of a session, a presbytery, a synod, or the General Assembly has the same basic foundational responsibility—to preside at meetings of these church councils. The *Book of Order* gives the moderator “the authority necessary for preserving order and for conducting efficiently the business of the body” (G-3.0104). The moderator’s role is one of guidance and facilitation—to help the body accomplish its work of prayerful discernment. The moderator may offer advice or rule on matters of procedure, but these rulings may be appealed and reversed by the body. Trust is a key ingredient in the relationship between a moderator and the council—the moderator who ensures that the rights of members are respected, and that business is conducted fairly and expeditiously, will seldom be challenged. In return for its trust, the body is freed to carry out its responsibilities confidently and efficiently.

The moderator of a presbytery celebrates transitions with our congregations, representing the presbytery at services of ordination and installation, asking the constitutional questions of the minister, and declaring the minister ordained or installed (W-4.0403, W-4.0404). In NCP, the Moderator sits as a voting member of the Leadership Council, which meets monthly, and which guides the work of the Presbytery through vision building, strategic planning, and coordination.

Our Moderator guides us, prays with and for us, and helps us live as the expression of Christ's church that God calls us to be.

I am grateful for the NCP Moderators I have worked with thus far—*Elder Shani McIlwain (Faith)* and the *Rev. Dr. Chris Deacon*. They have each enriched the life of our Presbytery through the particular gifts they have brought to this role. I look forward to discovering whom God has called to be the next Moderator when the Presbytery meets on May 19!

Grace and Peace,

Rev. David A. Baer, Stated Clerk