

LETTER FROM MODERATOR OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JOAN S. GRAY
217th General Assembly

March 24, 2008

Hi friends!

One thing I hate to hear coming out of the mouth of a Presbyterian is “I’m just [read only] an elder.” Hearing this statement makes my blood pressure go up. I have been known to scold the unfortunate person who said “I’m just an elder” for not appreciating their high office and launch into an exposition of the unique role of the elder in the Reformed tradition. If we are going to fulfill our potential as a denomination in the years ahead, we must redeem the role of elder as spiritual leader and invest more in the training and support of our elders. Our system of church government is arranged so that elders always outnumber pastors in the governing body of the local congregation, therefore no church will rise above the level of its elders.

If properly trained, encouraged, and supported elders can do great things. In Africa where the church is growing faster than they can train pastors many congregations are led by the elders. One pastor may oversee ten or more congregations and the day to day life of the congregation is in the hands of the elders. Though we are blessed with more pastors than the African churches, we still need to mine the leadership gifts of our elders to rise to the challenges before us. To be a Presbyterian elder is a unique and high calling, and there’s no “just’ about it!

Peace!

Joan S. Gray
Moderator, 217th GA