

# Illinois Prairie Presbytery Assembly Condensed Meeting Minutes

**May 19, 2026 – Stronghold Camp and Retreat Center, Oregon, Illinois**

The Illinois Prairie Presbytery gathered for its stated assembly meeting on May 19, 2026, at Stronghold Camp and Retreat Center. Moderator Rev. Mike Engle welcomed attendees and opened the meeting with prayer. The assembly affirmed the docket, approved previous meeting minutes, and welcomed first-time commissioners, corresponding members, and guests.

The day began with worship centered on the theme of “Balance,” featuring scripture, communion, prayer, and music. An offering was received for Stronghold Camp scholarships.

Several groups were commissioned during the meeting, including:

- Commissioners attending the 227th General Assembly in Milwaukee,
- Participants traveling to Kenya through the Imenti Partnership,
- Volunteers serving in the Dakota Partnership Vacation Bible School mission trip in South Dakota.

A learning session led by Rev. Lauren Patrus Betzel explored “The Church and AI,” prompting discussion about the role of artificial intelligence in ministry and congregational life.

A significant action of the assembly was the formal dissolution of Central Presbyterian Church of New Lenox. Members of the congregation and Administrative Commission were recognized and thanked for their faithful ministry. Remaining church assets will support the Resurrection Fund and the Native American Church Property Fund.

Committee and council reports highlighted continued ministry opportunities and transitions throughout the presbytery. Mission leaders encouraged participation in partnership and mission opportunities, while the Personnel Committee invited reflection on future leadership planning in anticipation of General Presbyter Rev. Eric Heinekamp’s retirement in 2027.

The Commission on Ministry approved several pastoral calls, covenant renewals, interim appointments, moderator appointments, and ministry profiles. The assembly also welcomed Rev. Mark Hughey into Illinois Prairie Presbytery and celebrated the installation of several ministry leaders across the region.

The presbytery continues to navigate congregational transitions, with several churches actively searching for pastors and others discerning closure or future direction. Somonauk United Presbyterian Church announced its final worship service for June 7, 2026.

The Nominating Committee presented and the assembly approved new leadership appointments for Presbytery Council, Vision Committee, and Commission on Ministry positions.

Rev. Eric Heinekamp shared updates from the General Presbyter and Stated Clerk's office, including:

- Recognition of churches receiving "Six for Six" awards,
- Progress on the presbytery's official name change and new logo,
- Ongoing administrative commissions for church closures,
- Upcoming boundary training opportunities,
- Encouragement to follow the work of the upcoming General Assembly.

Stronghold Camp representatives thanked congregations for supporting camp scholarship ministries, and the Treasurer's report was accepted unanimously.

Additional announcements included grant opportunities through the Cora J. Pope Home Foundation and recognition of ministry transitions within the presbytery.

The meeting concluded with prayer and adjournment at 2:35 p.m. The next stated assembly meeting will be held online via Zoom on September 15, 2026 at 9:30 a.m..