

Highlights of the February 10, 2026 Blackhawk Presbytery Assembly Meeting

The Blackhawk Presbytery Assembly met via Zoom the evening of February 10. Moderator Mike Engle welcomed more than 70 participants and opened with prayer and the Presbytery's mission statement. We welcomed two new minister members and many first-time ruling elder commissioners. The theme of the meeting was Who Are We.

Pastor Alan Willadsen began worship with a reading from James 1:22-27 and a sermon on identity and God's unchanging love. Rev. Jan Chandler presented Communion. The offering taken was taken to support the Presbytery's Kenya Partnership.

During the learning opportunity, General Presbyter Rev. Eric Heinekamp presented demographic and leadership trends within the Presbytery from 2019 to 2026. The presentation showed changes in congregations and membership, trends in pastoral leadership, the primarily rural nature of our presbytery, and some basic demographics of our congregations. Participants engaged in small group discussions focusing on identity, mission, community engagement, and future ministry opportunities for the Presbytery.

The assembly approved revisions to the Ecclesiastical Administrative Manual pending our name change to Illinois Prairie Presbytery. The Mission Committee highlighted opportunities for partnership, including a mission trip to South Dakota and support for the Kenya mission. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry announced new candidates for commissioned pastor. The Commission on Ministry received approval for revised Minimum Terms of Call and Sabbatical Leave policies, both intended to strengthen pastoral support, compensation equity, and clergy wellness. They also presented recent activity of the busy COM. The assembly approved an Administrative Commission to guide the dissolution of Central Presbyterian Church of New Lenox. The Nominating Committee received approval for leadership nominations across Presbytery committees and commissions.

Staff reports provided updates on congregational visits, administrative reviews, statistical reporting deadlines, and property matters involving several congregations. Our Stated Clerk shared the necrology report and prayed for the elders and ministers who passed away in 2025. The Synod report celebrated the receipt of a Lilly Foundation grant supporting multi-vocational ministry initiatives. The Treasurer reported that the Presbytery remains in strong financial health, aided by a significant gift from a dissolved congregation.

New business included plans to introduce "Big Questions" discussions at future assemblies, with the May meeting focusing on the church's engagement with artificial intelligence. The next stated meeting will be held in person on May 19, 2026, at Stronghold Camp & Retreat Center.