

Presbytery of Blackhawk Highlights of Presbytery Assembly November 18, 2025

The Presbytery of Blackhawk held a stated meeting on November 18, 2025 at First Presbyterian Church of DuPage in Bolingbrook with both in-person and Zoom participants. Moderator Rev. Lisa Lopez-Meyer moderated the first portion of the meeting.

The assembly welcomed first-time minister member Rev. Nikelle Johnson (Dixon, First) and first-time commissioner Karen Pillion (Utica-Waltham) along with corresponding members from neighboring presbyteries and the Synod of Lincoln Trails.

Worship and Leadership Transitions

The assembly gathered in worship with scripture, music, communion, and a sermon titled “*Come and See*” by Rev. Lisa-Lopez Meyer. During worship, Pastor Mike Engle was installed as Moderator of the Presbytery and Rev. Lauren Patrus-Betzel installed as Vice-Moderator. The Nominating Committee presented other leaders who were elected. An offering was received for Shared Mission Giving.

Learning and Formation

Our learning opportunity focused on *Intentional Authentic Evangelism* from the **8 Habits of Evangelism** with particular emphasis on the habit of *Radical Welcome*. The learning time began with videos from people in PC(USA) Office of Evangelism and moved to small group discussions.

Major Actions and Decisions

After lunch, Pastor Mike Engle moderated the remainder of the meeting which included several important actions.

- **Presbytery Name Change:** Following extensive discussion and ranked voting, the assembly approved changing the name of Blackhawk Presbytery to **Illinois Prairie Presbytery**. The change requires approval of the Synod and General Assembly with a target launch date of March 13, 2026. Until finalized, our name remains Blackhawk Presbytery.
- **Mission Funding:** The assembly approved allocating **\$10,000** from the Blackhawk Foundation account to the Mission Committee for food insecurity grants.
- **Nominations and Elections:** The assembly approved the slate of two Minister and two Ruling Elders to serve as commissioners to the **2026 General Assembly**.

Committee and Commission Work

- **Mission Committee** moderator Rev. Thea Kornelius mentioned the new grants for food insecurity and invited people to consider a 2026 trip to Kenya. She also celebrated the work of the Matthew 25 Task Force which has completed its work.
- Rev. Mike Selburg reported the **Personnel Committee** recently completed staff reviews.
- **Commission on Ministry** moderator Laurie Walker brought three action items for approval. These were a 2.0% increase in the minimum terms of call for 2026, approval of a revised minimum terms of call policy, and approval of an administrative commission to

install Rev. Katie Riks at First Presbyterian of Sterling. The COM reported new and renewed calls and covenants, moderators for congregations, and updates on transitions in congregations.

- The **Commission Preparation for Ministry** report noted that one candidate for ordination has passed all her senior ordination exams.

Reports and Highlights

- **General Presbyter and Stated Clerk**, Rev. Eric Heinekamp, shared reflections on denominational restructuring and recent leadership events that emphasize renewal and innovation. He presented several motions that were approved. These included the meeting schedule for 2026 which has two Zoom only and two in-person only meetings.
- **Stronghold Camp & Retreat Center director**, Dr. Dany Pierce, reported strong participation, financial progress, and future capital planning.
- **Treasurer**, Alan Willadsen, reported the presbytery remains in good financial standing.

The meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m. The next stated meeting of the Presbytery Assembly will be held **February 10, 2026**, via Zoom.