

**PRESBYTERY OF BLACKHAWK ASSEMBLY MEETING MINUTES
IN-PERSON
September 9, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.**

The Presbytery of Blackhawk convened on Tuesday, September 9, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. in a Stated Meeting held in person at Camp Stronghold and Retreat Center in Oregon, IL. This was a joint meeting of the Ecclesial body, the Presbytery of Blackhawk, and the Corporate body, the Presbytery of Blackhawk, Inc.

WELCOME

Moderator Rev. Lisa M. Lopez-Meyer welcomed all participants. She gave an overview of how the meeting would be conducted and provided instructions for speaking and voting during the meeting, and a reminder of where to locate the packet information on the presbytery website.

OPENING PRAYER AND CALL TO ORDER

Moderator Lisa Lopez-Meyer called the meeting to order at 9:35 and opened with prayer. She read the Vision and Values statement and the Blackhawk Presbytery's Land Acknowledgement.

The moderator welcomed Rev. Katie Ricks, a first-time minister member from Sterling, First.

Rev. Molly Fisherkeller, DeKalb, Westminster, and Rev. Nicole Melara, transitional pastor at Crystal Lake, Ridgefield, were recognized, as it was their last meeting with Blackhawk Presbytery.

First-time Ruling Elders Steve Connell, Crystal Lake, Ridgefield, and Lon Clark, Caldonia, Willow Creek were welcomed.

The moderator introduced the corresponding member, Pastor Alan Willadsen, a commissioned pastor serving as pastor of Fairbury, First, and the presbytery treasurer.

The moderator welcomed staff and visitors including Jeannette Sheehan, Dr. Danny Pierce, Ryan Anderson, guest musicians Paul Johnson and Pat Smith, and other visitors present.

Moderator Lopez-Meyer declared that a quorum was present. All attendees are listed on the meeting roll call (attached). She presented the proposed docket for the meeting.

	<u>Item</u>	<u>Leader</u>
9:00	Gathering with coffee	
9:15	First-time commissioner orientation	David Spaulding
9:30	Call to order and opening prayer	Lisa Lopez-Meyer
	Welcome and overview of the meeting	
	Quorum/Minutes/Docket/Corresponding Members	
10:00	Collaborative Preparation for Worship	
10:30	Worship	
11:30	Learning Together: Sharing Takeaways	
11:45	LANA Report	Laurie Walker
Noon	Lunch and break	
12:45	Council	Lisa Lopez-Meyer
	Committees of Council	
	Finance and Property	Scott Vandermyde

	Mission	Thea Kornelius
	Personnel	Mike Selburg
	Visioning and Assembly Planning	Lisa Lopez-Meyer
1:15	Committees / Commission of Assembly	
	Commission on Ministry	Laurie Walker
	Committee on Preparation for Ministry	Lauren Patrus-Betzel
	Nominating Committee	Eric Corbin
2:00	Reports	
	General Presbyter/ Stated Clerk Report	Eric Heinekamp
	Synod Report	KJ Welker
	Presbyterian Women	Jill Sunday
	Stronghold Camp	Danny Pierce
2:15	Corporation/Trustees	Lisa Lopez-Meyer
	Treasurer's report	Alan Willadsen
2:25	New and unfinished business	
2:30	Adjourn with prayer	Lisa Lopez-Meyer

The moderator moved that if there were no objections, the corresponding members be seated and the docket be approved. The motion was **Approved by Unanimous Consent**.

It was **moved** to approve the May 9, 2025, Regular Assembly meeting minutes with the correction of the spelling of Sue Jansen's name. The motion was seconded, and **APPROVED**.

Moderator Lisa Lopez-Meyer explained how the assembly will be actively engaged in the worship service. Then, the assembly broke into small groups to plan an assigned element of the worship service that they would facilitate during the service.

OPENING WORSHIP

Moderator Lopez-Meyer moved the assembly into a time of worship. Paul Johnson, Rev. Janet Chandler, Rev. Thea Kornelius, Honorably Retired Revs David Spaulding and Dr. Roy Backus, and Commissioned Pastor Mike Engle led the music.

Pat Smith, flautist from Bolingbrook played "Zuni Sunrise" as the Prelude and "We n'De Ya Ho" (Cherokee Morning Song) as the Postlude. The assembly was divided into small groups and led through the elements of the service, which included: Call to Worship, Call to Confession, Prayer of Confession, Assurance of Pardon, Sign of Reconciliation, scripture reading from John 4:22-26, Affirmation of Faith, the Offertory, and Prayers of the People. Rev. Jim McCrea, Galena, First, opened the worship service in prayer and preached a sermon titled "Setting the Presbytery on Fire." The offering was taken via cash, check to the presbytery office, or on the website and will be used to support the Blackhawk Presbytery Pastor Emergency Fund. Rev. Eric Heinekamp led the assembly in the sacrament of Holy Communion. The benediction was given by Rev. Dr. Michael Selburg.

SHARING TAKEAWAYS

Moderator Lisa Lopez-Meyer asked people to share takeaways from the learning on Monday and/or today.

LAND AND NAME ACKNOWLEDGMENT TASK FORCE REPORT (LANA)

LANA Moderator Laurie Walker summarized the impetus for the study and discernment leading up to the proposal to change the name of the Blackhawk Presbytery.

The assembly was dismissed for lunch.

COUNCIL ACTIONS

Moderator Lopez-Meyer called attention to the Presbytery Council's written report.

On behalf of the Presbytery Council, Eric Heinekamp **moved** that the November Presbytery meeting be moved to Tuesday, November 18, 2025. The previously scheduled date, November 11, is Veterans Day. The motion from Council and did not require a second. The Presbytery Assembly unanimously **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Moderator Lopez-Meyer announced the assembly would next be voting on a motion to change the name of Blackhawk Presbytery. It was **moved** to approve the use of paper ballots for the motion to change the name of the presbytery. There was a second and the assembly **VOTED** to approve the motion.

The Presbytery Council **moved** to change the name of the Blackhawk Presbytery. The motion from Council and did not require a second. After comments by those for and opposed to the motion, the Presbytery Assembly **VOTED** to approve the motion. 46 people voted, 35 of whom voted yes, and 11 who voted no.

It was **moved** to use the process that the Presbytery Council has selected to collect names from anyone who receives the online newsletter Connections to narrow the names down to the top four choices for a vote at the November assembly. It was seconded. Following discussion, there was an amendment to the motion.

It was **moved** to amend the motion to use rank-choice voting to narrow the names down using the system set by the Council: from all names submitted, the top 8 names would advance to the second round, then 6 names, and then 4 names. It was seconded and **VOTED** to approve.

It was **moved** to vote on the amended motion to use rank choice voting for determining the new name for the Presbytery. It was seconded and **VOTED** to approve the motion. 39 people voted; 31 voted yes and 8 voted no.

COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL

FINANCE AND PROPERTY

Scott Vandermyde presented the committee's written report. (see attached)

It was **moved** that the Presbytery Assembly approve the 2026 per capita rate at \$45.00 per person. The motion came from the Council and did not require a second. The Presbytery Assembly unanimously **VOTED** to approve the motion.

It was **moved** that the Presbytery Assembly approve the 2026 proposed budget with a total income of \$551,661 and total expenses of \$538,634. (see attached) The motion came from the Council and did not require a second. The Presbytery Assembly unanimously **VOTED** to approve the motion.

MISSION

Moderator Thea Kornelius highlighted that \$1,250 is left in the budget for additional grants in 2025. Applications are now being accepted for the Blackhawk-Imenti Partnership Trip on September 22 through October 5, 2026. Applications are due October 1, 2025.

Moderator Kornelius asked people present to share the mission work their churches are doing and many did.

PERSONNEL

Moderator Mike Selburg reported that the committee conducted reviews for Eric and Jeannette, and both are performing at an excellent level. This is Mike's last year on the committee, and looking ahead, new people are needed to volunteer on the committee.

VISIONING AND ASSEMBLY PLANNING

Moderator Lisa Lopez-Meyer shared that volunteers are needed to lead the committee.

COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES OF ASSEMBLY

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

Moderator Laurie Walker called attention to the commission's written report.

Barbara Bundick reported on actions taken by the COM with the draft of the Minimum Terms of Call. The draft is being shared with the assembly, and the committee is requesting feedback. There will be opportunities for Zoom conversations regarding questions about this policy.

The COM **moved** that the Presbytery Assembly receive the first reading of the policy on Minimum Terms of Call. It was **VOTED** to receive the first reading of the policy.

The COM **moved** approval of a policy statement that any pastors currently covered by the Transitional Pastor's Participation through the Board of Pensions, which includes family coverage, should continue to receive coverage of the pastor and spouse and/or family, if requested by the pastor, for 2026, without any reduction in the pastor's effective salary. The motion was seconded and **VOTED** to approve the motion.

ACTIONS TAKEN BY COM:

New Calls

1. **Approved** terms of call, if the way be clear, for Nikelle Johnson to serve Dixon, First as their next installed pastor, effective September 2025. She is coming from Flint, Michigan and will be ordained in her home church before being installed at Dixon.

Effective Salary	\$ 58,000
SECA	\$ 4,437
Reimbursable Expenses	\$ 12,980
Medical Coverage	\$ 9,280
Pension, Death, & Disability	\$ 5,800
Automobile Expense	\$ 1,500
Business/Professional	\$ 1,500
Continuing Education	\$ 1,500
Medical Reimbursement	\$ 3,480

Moving Expenses (in 2025) \$ 5,000
Study Leave time of 2 weeks, Vacation time of 4 weeks

New Commissions/Covenants

2. **Approved** temporary pastor covenant between David Spaulding (MSW) and Fulton effective August 10, 2025 – February 28, 2026.

Part-time: 60 hours/month at \$30/hour
Effective Salary \$ 1,800/mo.
SECA \$ 1,652/mo.
Automobile Expense \$ 840/mo.

3. **Approved** temporary pastor covenant between Phyllis Mueller (MSW) and Ridgefield-Crystal Lake effective October 5, 2025 – November 16, 2025.

Part-time- 10-15 hours/week
Cash Salary \$700/mo.
Automobile Expenses (\$.70/mile)
Return flight to Washington

4. **Approved** temporary pastor covenant between Joseph Mburu Ng'ang'a (MSW) and Rochelle, First effective June 22, 2025 – August 31, 2025.

Housing Provided by member \$250/wk.
Seminary Support \$400/wk.

Dissolution of Call

5. **Approved** the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between Molly Fisherkeller (MSW) and DeKalb, Westminster, if the way be clear, effective September 28, 2025 from DeKalb, Westminster. Molly has accepted a call in Delaware.

6. **Approved** the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between Doug Forsberg (MWS) and Rochelle First effective June 1, 2025. Doug has accepted a call from Media Presbyterian Church in Media, PA.

Renewal of Covenants and Contracts

7. **Approved** renewed covenant between New Lenox, Central and Chrystal Abbott's covenant effective January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025.

Cash Salary/ Total Effective Salary \$39,600
SECA Supplement \$15,000
Healthcare Reimbursement \$14,784
Automobile Expenses (.70/mile)
Study Leave Expenses \$500

8. **Approved** renewed covenant between Franklin Grove, First and Jack Briggs (CP) effective February 1, 2025 – January 31, 2026.

Part-time- 15 hours/week (half of ¾ time)
Cash Salary/ Total Effective Salary \$14,832.66
Healthcare Reimbursement (HAS) \$ 300.00
Health Insurance Allowance \$ 1,134.70
Automobile Expenses \$ 175.00
Continuing Education \$ 100.00

Approved Moderators

9. **Approved** Michael Selburg (MSW) to moderate Fulton Garden Plain.
10. **Approved** Eric Heinekamp (MSW) to moderate Dekalb, Westminster.
11. **Approved** Phil Thompson (CP) to moderate Dakota, Community.

Ministry Discernment Profiles (MDPs)

12. **Approved** MDP for Fulton, First.

Miscellaneous

13. **Approved** Administrative Commission for Martha Langford's installation at Rockford Second/First on June 8, 2025.

Transfers: None

OTHER INFORMATION

- Matthew Jones (MWS) was installed at Sandwich, Federated on June 1, 2025 who shares him with the Sandwich Church of the Nazarene.
- Crystal Lake, Crystal Lake-Ridgefield – Nicole Melara (MWS) is leaving September 21, 2025.
- Dixon First – Cheyanna Losey (MSW) leaves on August 31, 2025.
- Geneva, Fox Valley – Clinton Roberts (MWS) leaves September 28 and Michelle Hwang (MSW) returns from sabbatical on September 20, 2025.
- Sterling First – Katie Ricks begins September 1, 2025. Installation date is TBD.
- Jack Berghost (CP) resigned from Waterman, effective August 21, 2025.
- Phyllis Mueller (MSW) cancelled her temporary pastor covenant with Ridgefield-Crystal Lake prior to starting it.
- The PCUSA 1001 Worshipping Communities is offering \$10k with matching grants available for any small group that wants to start something new outside of an existing church body. Please contact our New Communities Committee with ideas or for more information.

COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

The CPM provided a written report, and CPM Moderator Lauren Patrus-Betzel had no additional comments.

NOMINATING

The Nominating Committee did not have a written report but Moderator Eric Corbin gave a brief update. Blackhawk can send 2 Ruling Elder commissioners and 2 Ministers of the Word and Sacrament to the General Assembly next summer in Milwaukee. Applications are due September 30. Eric also mentioned there are many openings on presbytery committees and commissions and we will vote on new leaders at the November assembly.

REPORTS

GENERAL PRESBYTER/STATED CLERK REPORT

Rev. Heinekamp presented his report (see attached). Eric gave more information on General Assembly in 2026 and mentioned he and Associate Stated Clerk Rev. Dr. David Spaulding will be holding session record reviews in October and November.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

There was no report for PW.

STRONGHOLD

Executive Director, Dr. Danny Pierce gave an update on Stronghold Camps. He mentioned they had a very good summer program and encouraged people to promote the fall youth retreats. He stated that Stronghold is nearly complete in repaying the presbytery for payroll advances made in 2017-2019.

SYNOD OF LINCOLN TRAILS

SOLT commissioners Rev. KJ Wester and Ruling Elder Derek Sherman reported on 2 important activities in the Synod. Wellspring, a revised New Pastors program, will hold its second gathering at the end of October and several Blackhawk pastors will participate. The Synod is finalizing the work to secure a sizeable grant from the Lilly foundation that will be used to support presbyteries.

CORPORATIONS AND TRUSTEES

TRUSTEES REPORT

There was no report by the trustees.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Alan Willadsen presented the Treasurer's financial report for YTD activity though the end of July. The report was received by **UNANIMOUS CONSENT**.

ADJOURN WITH PRAYER

Moderator Lisa Lopez-Meyer called for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made, seconded, and **VOTED** to adjourn the meeting of the day. Moderator Lopez-Meyer closed the meeting with prayer at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Eric Heinekamp
Stated Clerk

Dorene A. Tieche Stated Clerk
Recording Clerk

The next stated meeting of the Presbytery Assembly will be Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 9:30 am at First Presbyterian Church of DuPage, Bolingbrook, IL. This will be a hybrid meeting – in person or on Zoom.