

# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF LAGRANGE

*An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ*

S. LAGRANGE RD AT COSSITT AVE.  
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LAGRANGE, IL

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708.352.0800

SUNDAY MARCH 1, 2026

COMMUNION SUNDAY

## Dreaming God's Dream

NO GIFT TOO SMALL, NO DREAM TOO BIG.

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**WE EXTEND A WARM WELCOME TO ALL WHO WORSHIP WITH US TODAY**

*We acknowledge that First Congregational Church of LaGrange sits on the unceded, traditional, and ancestral homelands of Native peoples. We honor with gratitude the land itself and the Indigenous peoples who have been caretakers of the land for thousands of years, into the present day.*

*\*Signifies Please stand as you are able.*

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**PRELUDE**

Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley

Thomas Keesecker  
AnnLaura Tapia, piano

**WELCOME**

Dick Lauterbach

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

Dick Lauterbach

One: Christ of the comfortable, you would call us from our security and sameness, down that unknown path which leads to God's heart:

**Many: With trust, we would place our hands in yours and follow.**

One: Companion of our sleepless nights, you would beckon us out of the shadows of our fears, calling us to bring our doubts and questioning hearts along:

**Many: With humility, we would listen to those answers we do not expect or even understand.**

One: Word which creates out of nothingness, you would fill us with life where we see only emptiness, you would keep your promises when all ours lie littered on the ground:

**Many: We would let your grace transform us into faithful disciples.**

*Silence is kept*

One: Keeper of every moment,

**Many: walk with us, we pray.**

One: Watcher in the night:

**Many: Stay with us, we pray.**

One: Spirit of new life:

**Many: be in us, as we pray together saying,**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen**

**\*GATHERING HYMN**

Eternal Light, Shine in My Heart

TALLIS' CANON



1 E - ter - nal light, shine in my heart; e - ter - nal hope, lift up my eyes; e -  
2 E - ter - nal life, raise me from death; e - ter - nal bright - ness, make me see; e -  
3 un - til by your most cost - ly grace, in - vit - ed by your ho - ly word, at



ter - nal power, be my sup - port; e - ter - nal wis - dom, make me wise.  
ter - nal Spir - it, give me breath; e - ter - nal Sav - ior, come to me,  
last I come be - fore your face to know you, my e - ter - nal God.

**\*PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION (*unison*)**

Dick Lauterbach

**We are all too human, Faithful God, and so think we have nothing to learn from others, and thus discount ancestors in the faith like Nicodemus or Sarah. We look for an answer online, convinced that we can trust whatever we find. We close tight the shutters of our souls, so the Spirit can only rattle us, but not get in to transform our lives. We believe we only need to make changes when you call us to transform**

**our spirits. Yet you continue to keep watch of us, Promise Giver, whether it is when we swagger through the sunshine of our lives, or in those shadowed moments of uncertainty in the night. You will not stumble as you continue to come to us, to lead us into your kingdom. You will always be our help, whether we recognize it or accept it, even as you remained faithful to Jesus the Christ. Amen**

**KIDS QUEST**

Rev. Brian Damrow

**SCRIPTURE:**

John 3:1-17

Dick Lauterbach

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him."

**SERMON**

Longing for Mystery

Rev. Brian Damrow

**INVITATION TO GENEROSITY**

Dick Lauterbach

Place your gift in the offering plate

or

Text your gift to

708-688-5486

or



or go to

<http://tinyurl.com/FCCLGChangingLives>

**OFFERTORY**

I to the Hills Lift Up Mine Eyes

Jean Berger  
Chancel Choir

I to the hills lift mine eyes, from where shall come mine aid.  
Mine help doth from Jehovah come, which heaven and earth hath made.

He will not let thy foot be moved, nor slumber that thee keeps.  
Lo he that keepeth Israel, he slumbreth not, nor sleeps.

The Lord thy keeper is, the Lord on thy right hand the shade.  
The sun by day, nor moon by night, shall thee by stroke invade.

The Lord shall keep thee from all ill thy soul he keeps away.  
Thy going out and thy income, the Lord keeps now and aye. Amen

**\*OFFERTORY RESPONSE (UNISON) Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow** OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God from whom all bless-ings flow; Praise God, all crea-tures here be - low;

The first system of musical notation consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff contains a melody of eighth and quarter notes, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The lyrics are written below the treble staff.

Praise God for all that love has done; Cre - a - tor, Christ, and Spir - it One. A - men.

The second system of musical notation continues the melody and accompaniment from the first system. It concludes with a final cadence in the treble staff, marked with a double bar line and repeat dots. The lyrics are written below the treble staff.

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (UNISON)**

Dick Lauterbach

You trust us enough to place your blessings in us, so may we be as faithful in offering them back to you, so others might be kept in their loneliness, might be fed in their emptiness, might receive hope in their despair. This we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.

verses 1, 2, 5



1. Tree of Life and awe-some mys - t'ry, In your  
 2. Seed that dies to rise in glo - ry, May we  
 3. We re - mem - ber truth once spo - ken, Love passed  
 4. Gen - tle Je - sus, might - y Spir - it, Come in -  
 5. Christ, you lead and we shall fol - low, Stum - bling



death we are re - born, Though you die in all of  
 see our - selves in you, If we learn to live your  
 on through act and word, Ev - 'ry per - son lost and  
 flame our hearts a - new, We may all your joy in -  
 though our steps may be, One with you in joy and



his - t'ry, Still you rise with ev - 'ry morn, Still you  
 sto - ry We may die to rise a - new, We may  
 bro - ken Wears the bod - y of our Lord, Wears the  
 her - it If we bear the cross with you, If we  
 sor - row, We the riv - er, you the sea, We the



rise with ev - 'ry morn.  
 die to rise a - new.  
 bod - y of our Lord.  
 bear the cross with you.  
 riv - er, you the sea.

COMMUNION INVITATION

Rev. Brian Damrow

COMMUNION PRAYER

May the God of great adventures be with you!  
**And also with you!**

It is God who is able to keep our hearts filled with hope and peace.

**We will offer our hearts to the One who is our Keeper.**

Trust in the promises whose fulfillment we cannot see.

**We lift our songs to the One who is always with us.**

You went into the shadows of nothingness, bearing your Light of creation, Keeper of all, so that life might burst forth where there was none: white sands at the edge of blue green seas, shale formed under the crust of the earth, warm mornings and frigid nights to mark the seasons. You blessed your children with creation's gifts so we might prove to be a blessing to others, but we watched the comings and goings of our poor choices that led us from you, allowing ourselves to be blown about by them.

Prophets responded to your call to them, daring to bring us those words we did not want to hear, calling us back to a way of life we had abandoned, but we knew that we preferred life in the absence of your presence. For this reason, you sent Jesus into the world, so that we, along with all creation, might be saved. With those who toss and turn in the night, with those who have responded to your call, we lift our thanksgivings to you:

**Holy, holy, holy are you, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. All creation blesses your glorious name.**

**Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the One who comes to answer our questions.**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

When his arrest seemed near, Jesus sat at the table in an upper room, with his closest friends and relatives. As he had done so many times before, he took the bread, and after giving thanks to you he shared it among the disciples, vowing to continue the struggle despite the risk, he said, "I will not eat this again until it is fulfilled in the Beloved Community of God."

Likewise, after the meal he took the cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them saying, "Truly I tell you, I will never drink of the fruit of the vine until I drink it with you in the Beloved Community of God."

As we continue the journey to Jerusalem, as we seek to leave our comfortable lives to follow, we would talk about that mystery we call faith:

**Christ died, faithful to the end.**

**Christ was raised, filled with your righteousness.**

**Christ is among us speaking your truth.**

What then are we to say, Keeper of our lives? It is your Spirit poured out upon us and upon the gifts of the Table which brings us new life. It is the brokenness of the bread which gives us life, that life poured out for those who have no hope, for those who wander in the shadows. It is the grace of the cup which overflows with your gifts, so we might go to be a blessing to all forsaken by the world.

**AMEN**

## **SHARING THE ELEMENTS**

### **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Gracious and loving God, you have made us one in the body of Christ and nourished us at your table with holy food and drink. Thank you for feeding our hunger and relieving our thirst. Now send us into the world to do the work you have called us to do: to find the lost and lonely, to heal broken souls, to free prisoners, and to make the powerful care. Grant us the strength to persevere in resisting evil, to proclaim in all we say and do, your good news in Christ Jesus. Amen.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Dick Lauterbach

### **\*HYMN**

Time Change Song

CWM RHONDDA

**God of sleep, and God of slumber, help us not be late, we ask:  
Changing clocks on forward number, may we not forget this task.  
Choir directors, preachers, teachers, all will bless your holy name,  
If to Sunday church on time we came.**

### **\*BENEDICTION**

Rev. Brian Damrow

## **POSTLUDE**

The Glory of These Forty Days

Robert J. Powell  
AnnLaura Tapia, organ

## **THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS:**

Reader Leader: Dick Lauterbach

Usher: Lawrence Bain

Coffee Hour Hosts: Sandra Kappmeyer & Lexie Carther

Audio/Video: Lizza Obeng & David Watts

Laundry Hero: Wendy Seifert

## Prayer Requests

- For Juanita, family of Nancy Coleman, for strength and healing.
- For Reid Bannecker, brother-in-law of Julia and Kevin Cunningham, who is in hospice.
- For Church Member, Barbara Hultman, prayers for healing while she recovers at home.
- For Camille (Dave Watt's sister) and Brian Bell.
- For church member Larry Adkison, prayers for healing.
- For church member Stephanie Johnston who is recovering from an injury.

*If you or someone you know needs pastoral care, please call the main office at (708) 352-0800*

## This Week at Church

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>3/1</b>	10:00 a.m.	Celebration of Worship	Sanctuary/ online
		11:00 a.m.	Coffee Hour	Founders Room
		11:30 a.m.	Ring and Sing	Room 304
		7:00 p.m.	OA	Drawing Room
<b>Monday</b>	<b>3/2</b>	11:00 a.m.	Weekly Staff Meeting	Church Office
		6:00 p.m.	Galaxy Theater Rehearsal	Dining Room
		6:30 p.m.	AA	Drawing Room
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>3/3</b>	6:00 p.m.	Galaxy Theater Rehearsal	Dining Room
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>3/4</b>	7:30 p.m.	Carillon Handbell Choir	Room 305
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>3/5</b>	4:15 p.m.	Confirmation Class	Zackley Youth Center
		7:00 p.m.	Chancel Choir	Choir Room
<b>Friday</b>	<b>3/6</b>	9:00 a.m.	OA	Drawing Room
		3:30 p.m.	Continuing Adult Education through Study	Zoom
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>3/7</b>	9:00 a.m.	Saturday Meals Program	Dining Room
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>3/8</b>	10:00 a.m.	Celebration of Worship	Sanctuary/ online
		11:00 a.m.	Coffee Hour	Founders Room
		11:30 a.m.	Ring and Sing	Room 304
		7:00 p.m.	OA	Drawing Room

# Announcements

**Our first Heritage Cooking episode!** Log into Facebook or Instagram today at 12pm to watch our first Heritage cooking episode, hosted by Geordan Stenson, with guest Dick Lauterbach! And if you haven't followed our church on social media yet, what are you waiting for? Support your church family and help us spread the word about the wonderful things we do. Your likes and shares have a huge impact on our visibility to our larger community!

**FCCLG Book Club will meet next on Tuesday, March 24th at 7:30 pm via zoom.** Our selected book is the *Frozen River*, by Ariel Lawhon, a historical fiction mystery set in 1789 Maine, centered on midwife Martha Ballard. The story uses her actual meticulous diary entries as a foundation for a fictionalized murder investigation. Following the discovery of a man's body in the frozen Kennebeck River- who was accused of rape-Martha investigates the murder while fighting against a dismissive, male dominate community to secure justice for victims. All readers are welcome! Contact Kathy Donaldson [kathygdonaldson@gmail.com](mailto:kathygdonaldson@gmail.com) for a Zoom invitation or with any questions.

**FCCLG Ministry Teams:** If you have not yet scheduled a meeting with Pastor Brian, please contact the office at [mainoffice@fcclg.org](mailto:mainoffice@fcclg.org) for scheduling.

**Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM)** is the way our congregation participates in the ministry of the wider United Church of Christ — supporting vital work **in the Illinois Conference and across the globe.**

Through OCWM, local churches like ours empower:

- **Leadership support and care** for clergy and congregations across Illinois
- **Resources and training** that strengthen churches in times of change
- **Justice and compassion ministries** serving communities in need
- **National and global mission work**, including disaster relief, refugee support, and long-term community development

Every gift to OCWM helps extend Christ's love far beyond our own walls — strengthening the church, equipping leaders, and supporting ministries of compassion, justice, and welcome throughout the world.

**Thank you for giving generously to this wider mission we share.**

**Office Hours:** Please note – regular office hours are Mon & Tues from 9am-3pm, and Wed & Thurs from 9am-2pm.

**Galaxy Theater Company presents The Odd Couple:** Today at 2:00pm!

Location: FCCLG, 100 S. Sixth Ave. Ticket prices: \$20 adult & \$17 students/seniors

# FCCLG Leadership in 2026

<b>Council:</b>			
Moderator of Council	Kent Llewellyn	moderator@fcclg.org	
Past Moderator	Tom Lowry		
Vice Moderator	Patrick John		
Clerk	Sherrri Ries		
Treasurer	Amanda Ries	treasurer@fcclg.org	
Members At Large	Noah Gartner (yr 3/3) Kaki Lynch (yr1/3)		
Transitional Pastor	Rev. Brian Damrow	pastor@fcclg.org	
<b>Ministries:</b>			
Volunteer Coordinator	Stephanie Johnston		
Broadcasting	John Hoo Lizza Obeng	Amanda Murphy David Watts	
Faith Formation	Jerry Palmer (Adult Ed)	Amanda Ries (Sunday School)	
Green Team	Laurie Braun Claudia Byrne	Mary Ann Daniels Diane Kasnick	Dawn Mackie
Membership	Petra Hentzel* Janet Sampson	Sherrri Ries Faith Ullrich	
Missions	Lisa Aulerich-Marciniak Kathy Donaldson*	Jim Marciniak	Michelle Meuer Wendy Seifert
Nurture	Betsy Colombe * Amy Crumrine LuAnn Hall	Angela Harrison Sue Hoffman Sandra Kappmeyer	Amanda Ries
Personnel	Open	Open	Open
Property	Dick Lauterbach Dave Ries	Mike Ries* Erik Sander	Dave Watts
Social Justice	Laurie Braun	Kathy Donaldson	
Social Media	Amanda Murphy		
Stewardship	Ellen Hamilton Kent Llewellyn	Tom Lowry Susan Lynch	Jean O'Brien Mike Ries
Worship	Lawrence Bain Lexie Carther	Bob Klestil*	
	*Team Contact		

Ministers  
 Music Director  
 Office Administrator  
 Events & Building Coordinator  
 Financial Coordinator

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All of Us  
 Ryan Cox  
 AnnLaura Tapia  
 Jamie Dougherty  
 Tammy Bauer

**March 1, 2026**  
**Second Sunday in Lent**  
**John 3:1-17**

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. — John 3:16*

Twenty-seven words. That's all John uses to tell us about this life of faith. It's short, sweet and powerful. So much so that German Reformer Martin Luther labeled the 27 words "the heart of the Bible, the Gospel in miniature."

But could it really be that simple?

I asked that question once when I found myself singing a Vacation Bible School song about John 3:16 in front of 20 sugared-up children. As I belted out the biblical truth about God loving the world — complete with the choral refrain "he is the truth, the way, the life" — I wondered what those words would mean someday to the little voices that joined me off key.

Would remembering God's limitless love for them be the very thing that would save them? And how many would go beyond the way-too commercialized Gospel soundbite of John 3:16 to grapple alongside Nicodemus, the educated Pharisee who was told by Jesus that "no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above?"

While it would be wonderful for 27 words to be the Gospel in miniature, we know there's more to this life of faith. There are dark nights of the soul as well as glorious epiphanies. Through it all, we question God's love more often than we like to admit, and we find it down right frightening to surrender to the Spirit. As Jesus explained to Nicodemus it is the second birth of the Spirit, not flesh, that will help us see a bit better the reign of God. But the Spirit, Jesus says, will blow where it chooses.

And that is okay. Really. Read my words again. It is okay to allow the Spirit to blow you in the God direction. Go to the unknown and unwelcomed places knowing that as you are guided by the Spirit. God's bold blessing is forever with you. That is the blessing of a love so strong and steadfast that no harm will ever come to you.

Now that's the song I wish I belted out for those children at Vacation Bible School — a song of being born in the Spirit and of living unafraid of life's twisting and changing paths, for there's always an abundance of God's redemptive love for them — and for you.

Mission Moments tell a story about our congregation's connection with the United Church of Christ. You make possible these ministries through our gifts to Our Church's Wider Mission in our Annual Budget. For more information visit [https:// www.ucc.org](https://www.ucc.org)

