

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF LAGRANGE

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

S. LAGRANGE RD AT COSSITT AVE.

100 S. Sixth Ave.

LAGRANGE, IL

mainoffice@FCCLG.org

www.FCCLG.org

708.352.0800

SUNDAY MARCH 22, 2026

Dreaming God's Dream

NO GIFT TOO SMALL, NO DREAM TOO BIG.

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.*

PRELUDE

Meditation on "Beautiful Savior"

arr. Cathy Moklebust
Carillon Handbell Choir

WELCOME

Jim Marciniak

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Jim Marciniak

One: This is not the time for platitudes, for simple answers and tired clichés. This is the time for breaking hearts and weary spirits.

Many: Let our worship be arms that can hold all that grieves us.

One: This is not the place for blame, for pointing fingers and second guessing. This is the time for angry tears and aching wails.

Many: Let our worship be a witness to journey alongside us as we break.

One: When we are standing at the edge of the tomb staring into the truth of the death-dealing forces of our world, when there is nothing left to do but to go and weep,

Many: Let our worship be the song calling us forth from the grave to the community that can unbind us and set us free.

***GATHERING HYMN**

New Century Hymnal #484

O Come to Me, You Weary

verses 1-3

MEIRIONYDD

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

Rev. Brian Damrow

The story of Lazarus rising from the dead, our gospel reading for today, feels like it has grief written under every line. Under Lazarus' illness and Jesus' absence. Under the disciples' questions and the danger of returning to Judea. Under Martha's believing and Mary's weeping. Under the stone and the stench of death. And it is through this grieving that transformation becomes possible. So, today, let us seek transformation and new life, not through confession or accountability, but through our grieving of the death-dealing forces in our world, for all that binds us to the death machine. Let our love for what death will touch open us to vulnerability, open us to these rites of grief.

TIME OF REFLECTION

(During our time of reflection, you are invited to write on the provided butterfly the spirits that bind you or our world—those in need of release.)

HYMN OF REFLECTION

New Century Hymnal #511

I Love My God, Who Heard My Cry

SMALLWOOD

SCRIPTURE:

John 11:1-45

Jim Marciniak

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them." After saying this, he told them,

“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for

the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in him.

KIDS QUEST

Rev. Brian Damrow

SERMON

Longing for Authenticity

Rev. Brian Damrow

***MESSAGE IN MUSIC**

There Is a Balm

Ysaÿe M. Barnwell
Chancel Choir

Refrain: There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole,
there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.

If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul,
you can tell the love of Jesus, He died to save us all. [Refrain]

Sometimes I feel discouraged and I think my work's in vain,
but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again. [Refrain]

PASTORAL PRAYER

Rev. Brian Damrow

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. Brian Damrow

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

MISSION MOMENT

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

Jim Marciniak

Place your gift in the offering plate

or

Text your gift to

708-688-5486

or



or go to

<http://tinyurl.com/FCCLGChangingLives>

OFFERTORY

When Jesus Wept the Falling Tear

arr. Dean M. Estabrook
Carillon Handbell Choir

*When Jesus wept, the falling tear in mercy flowed beyond all bound.
When Jesus groaned, a trembling fear seized all the guilty world around.*

This tune by William Billings from 1770, is often associated with Holy Week. However, it was inspired by words from today's passage: "Jesus wept." Originally conceived as a simple round, sung a cappella, this bell arrangement captures the sadness and angst in the text.

On Maundy Thursday the Chancel will sing this text in a powerful arrangement that intersperses words of Mary.

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

Musical score for the Offertory Response, 'Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow'. The score is written for a unison voice part and a piano accompaniment. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a vocal line and a piano line. The lyrics are: 'Praise God from whom all bless-ings flow; Praise God, all crea-tures here be - low;'. The second system also has a vocal line and a piano line. The lyrics are: 'Praise God for all that love has done; Cre - a - tor, Christ, and Spir - it One. A - men.' The music is in a major key with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C).

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION (UNISON)**

Jim Marciniak

**From these offerings, Holy One, create freedom.
From these hearts, Holy One, raise up love.
From these hands, Holy One, bring life.
From every one of our gifts, in the sharing of our resources, may we be unbound,
and called forth into a new day together. Amen.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jim Marciniak



1 What calls me from the death where I have rest - ed?
 2 Now I can hear the voice of Je - sus call - ing,
 3 The rem - nants of my past I now am shed - ding;
 4 No mat - ter that my tomb was of long stand - ing,



Why am I now e - mer - ging from my tomb?
 but it is not the Sa - vior's voice a - lone,
 the bits of cloth that cling I now dis - card,
 that change seemed fut - ile, out of reach for me.



I sense that I am com - ing to be test - ed. Is
 for o - thers share their words as tears are fall - ing. Col -
 And in this new di - rec - tion I am head - ing, I
 If I ac - cept the life that God is hand - ing, my



this my sec - ond birth - ing from the womb?
 lec - tive - ly, they roll a - way the stone.
 know that I will find my own re - ward.
 bless - ing is a new i - den - ti - ty.

*BENEDICTION

Rev. Brian Damrow

POSTLUDE

Selections from Partita on Ach was soll ich Sünder machen

Johann Pachelbel
AnnLaura Tapia, organ

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS:

Reader Leader: Jim Marciniak

Usher: Lawrence Bain

Coffee Hour Hosts: Nurture

Audio/Video: John Hoo & David Watts

Laundry Hero: Laurie Braun

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.
- For Wyatt, nephew of Jean O'Brien's friend, that God will show him a path.

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

This Week at Church

Sunday	3/22	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
Monday	3/23	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
Tuesday	3/24	5:00 p.m.	Meditative Prayer Ministry	Chapel
		7:30 p.m.	FCCLG Book Club	Zoom
Wednesday	3/25	6:00 p.m.	Galaxy Theater Rehearsal	Dining Room
		7:30 p.m.	Carillon Handbell Choir	Room 305
Thursday	3/26	4:15 p.m.	Confirmation Class	Zackley Youth Center
		7:00 p.m.	Chancel Choir	Choir Room
Friday	3/27	9:00 a.m.	OA	Drawing Room
		3:30 p.m.	Continuing Adult Education through Study	Zoom

Saturday	3/28	9:00 a.m.	Saturday Meals Program	Dining Room
Sunday	3/29	10:00 a.m.	Celebration of Worship	Sanctuary/ online
		11:00 a.m.	Coffee Hour	Founders Room
		7:00 p.m.	OA	Drawing Room

Announcements

Holy Week Worship Schedule



Palm Sunday, 3/29: Celebration of Worship 10:00 a.m.

Maundy Thursday, 4/2: Tenebrae Service at 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday, 4/3: Worship Service at 7:00 p.m.
at Plymouth Place, 315 N La Grange Rd.

Easter Morning, 4/5: Celebration of Worship 10:00 a.m.



Easter Flowers: Help bring the sanctuary to life on April 5 by dedicating a lily to a loved one. The cost per lily is \$20 and orders must be placed today! You will be able to take the lily home after the Easter service. Please put a note on an offering envelope or email the church office: mainoffice@fclcg.org.

The lily cross that adorns the altar is another way to recognize a loved one. Please contact the office if you would like to donate the cross this year. The cost is \$135.

Help bloom the Living Cross – on Easter morning bring cut flowers and place them on the wooden frame. The cross will decorate the back of the sanctuary and is great for photos (and social media posts!).

Easter Morning Breakfast—The Nurture Team invites you and your family for breakfast on Easter morning, April 5, BEFORE church. Come by anytime from 8:30-9:55 a.m. in the Founder’s Room. We look forward to seeing you! Please note there is no coffee hour after the church service on Easter.

Wacky Walkers: Wacky Walkers will meet today, Sunday, March 22nd. The walking will occur at 1:00, location to be announced. Fellowship will start at 2:30 at the Palmer house in Downers Grove. Please contact Petra Hentzel for more information.

FCCLG Book Club will meet this 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. All readers are welcome! Contact Kathy Donaldson kathygdonaldson@gmail.com for a Zoom invitation or with any questions.

Missions Giving Priorities Survey: The Ministry of Missions seeks your input on key areas you want our church community to support through our monetary donations. There are paper surveys available on the table at the back of the church. Please fill out a form and place it in the treasure box, or use the QR code to fill out a form online.



Meditative Prayer Ministry: We are grateful for the many ways our church family continues to seek God's presence together. Our Meditative Prayer Ministry will be on Tuesday evenings from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., in our chapel. During these Tuesday evening hours, the chapel will be open to all. There will be no formal program, no required structure—only a sacred, welcoming space for silence, reflection, Scripture meditation, and personal prayer.

Extra, Extra, Extra! Stuff needs a new home. After organizing some storage areas at FCCLG, there are several items no longer used here. If you can use them, please take them home! Items are located just inside the Founder's Room. Items remaining today will be donated.



Help Host Coffee Hour! The Nurture Team is looking for volunteers to host Coffee Hour. Don't worry—you won't be on your own! A team member will be there to assist as you serve the treats you provide. Our church community truly values this time of connection and fellowship. You can sign up online or in the Founders Room. Thank you for helping make this special time possible!



One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a Special Mission Offering of the United Church of Christ that supports partners worldwide with ministries that fund health, education, and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries, and both international and domestic disaster response. We will be collecting for this offering through April 12th. Thank you for your support of this offering!

FCCLG Leadership in 2026

Council:			
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	
Ministries:			
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

www.fcclg.org
Ryan@fcclg.org
MainOffice@fcclg.org
Events@fcclg.org
Bookkeeper@fcclg.org

All of Us
 Ryan Cox
 AnnLaura Tapia
 Jamie Dougherty
 Tammy Bauer

Breath of Hope

March 22, 2026

Fifth Sunday in Lent

John 11:1-45

The first sermon that ever made tears roll down my cheeks was heard in a New York City church in my early 30s. I was a single Manhattan editor facing the proverbial fork in the road of life, not knowing which way to go. Even worse was that I had no desire to take any step in any direction. I was stuck in what felt like a dank cave of gloom.

The preacher began talking about poor, dead Lazarus. Lazarus' sisters had sent word to Jesus about his friend being ill, urging him to come quickly. Jesus took his time, though. When he arrived, Lazarus had been wrapped in burial cloth and placed in a tomb for a couple of days. Jesus cried but then wiped his tears and called to his dead friend to come out.

This is when the preacher got dramatic, standing in the middle of the chancel and looking into an invisible tomb, shouting, "Come out! Live!"

The words reverberated from every corner of the sanctuary. The preacher then turned away from the imagined tomb and looked at us, the worshippers, and with an urgent, quieter plea, he begged for us to, "Come out! And finally live!"

The first tear ran down my cheek. Then the second. Then came the deluge, for I had realized I had been wrapped in my own burial clothes of fear. I had allowed the stone of depression to seal me from the hope that was still around.

That day I didn't hear a dramatic preacher preach. I heard Jesus himself cry to me, "Come out! There is still so much life to be lived. Remove the cloths of fear wrapped around you. Step out of the dark tomb of death and into the light of life — new life filled with God's promises of an amazing future."

Truthfully, I didn't hear the rest of the preacher's sermon. I was too excited to start living again.

On this Sunday in Lent when we are so close to the cross, when soon we will be hearing another resurrection story — THE resurrection of all resurrections, that of Jesus — we are reminded that God can and will revive us as well. Jesus is standing this day outside of whatever door you have slammed shut and he is breathing hope back into your lifeless world. It's time to come out of your tomb of grief, hopelessness, despair or indecision, and do something radical: Live!

Loving God, You know all too well how we often give up when things don't go our way or when we seem to have hit a dead end. But You see that this is not the end for us — or of us. There is still more to experience and to learn. May this day we heed Jesus' words to "Come out and finally live." In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's *Sunday Bulletin*.)

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)

