

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 JULY 19, 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

Jesus Loves Me

Charles Callahan

AnnLaura Tapia, piano

WELCOME

Dick Lauterbach

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Dick Lauterbach

One: We gather not just as a people of God, but as a covenant community — bound by love, justice, and the promise of God's presence.

Many: We come in faith, in hope, and in the knowledge that God's covenant is for all.

One: In the beginning, God made all things good — and in the covenant, God promised to keep creation whole.

Many: We respond by caring for the earth, honoring all life, and walking in God's way.

One: In the covenant with Israel, God called us to be a light to the nations — a promise fulfilled in Christ.

Many: We come to worship the God who calls us to love, serve, and stand with the marginalized.

One: In the new covenant, God's Spirit empowers us to live in peace, justice, and unity.

Many: We worship the God who holds us in covenant, and who calls us to live out that promise in our world.

***OPENING HYMN**

Spirit, Open My Heart

WILD MOUNTAIN THYME

Refrain

Spir - it, o - pen my heart to the joy and pain of
liv - ing. As you love may I love, in re -
ceiv - ing and in giv - ing. Spir - it, o - pen my heart.

1. God, re - place my ston - y heart with a
2. Write your love up - on my heart as my
3. May I weep with those who weep, share the

heart that's kind and ten - der. All my cold - ness and
law, my goal, my sto - ry. In each thought, word, and
joy of sis - ter, broth - er. In the wel - come of

to Refrain

fear to your grace I now sur - ren - der.
deed, may my liv - ing bring you glo - ry.
Christ, may we wel - come one an - oth - er.

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION

Dick Lauterbach

Loving Mystery, Holy Creator, we come before you not as distant transgressors, but as a people who stand in the covenant you made with us — a covenant written not on stone, but in our hearts and minds, as you have promised through Jeremiah that you will put your laws into our hearts, and in our minds. We embrace this as a living truth, a call to be one with you through the power of our Holy Spirit. We now ask that you renew our minds, that we may discern your good, pleasing, and perfect will, and that we may be transformed to live into your image of love, with intensifying glory. Replace our hardened places with love and fill our thoughts with your truth. Let our minds be a sanctuary of purity and let our actions reflect your justice and mercy. Transform us so that we may be an ambassador of your light, not only in our own life but in the world — when the discouraged cry for hope, make us hope; when the hungry cry for bread, make us bread; when the suffering cry for help, make us help. We live in this covenant with You — a covenant of grace, of love, of justice. We commit to honor it by living with integrity, by standing for truth, and by loving as you have loved. May we be transformed again and again, as you keep us close to You, and as you transform the world through our ministry.

SCRIPTURE:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Dick Lauterbach

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

KIDS QUEST

Rev. Brian Damrow

SERMON

God the Covenant Maker

Rev. Brian Damrow

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.

*HYMN

O God Who Gives Us Life

NOEL

1 O God, who gives us life and breath, who shapes us in the womb,
2 O God, who calls your people out to venture and to dare,
3 O God of cov-e - nant and law, re - vealed in cloud and flame,
who guards our lives from birth to death, then leads us from the tomb:
to plumb the bleak a - byss of doubt and find you e - ven there:
your might - y deeds e - voke our awe; we dare not speak your name.
de - liv - er us from fears that kill the life we have from you.
when we de-spair in wan - der-ing through wastes of emp - ty lies,
Yet we by faith are drawn to you and will your peo - ple prove,
Help us to know your Spir - it still is mak - ing all things new.
re - fresh us with the liv - ing spring of hope that nev - er dies.
as on our hearts you write a - new the cov - e - nant of love.

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

Open My Eyes

Marcello, arr. Grotenhuis
Lily and Geordan Stenson

Open my eyes, and I shall see;
incline my heart, and I shall desire;
order my footsteps, and I shall walk,
walk in the ways of your commandments.

O God, my Lord, let there be no one, no one besides you.
Teach me to worship you, teach me to serve you in all I do,
with truth of spirit, with heart and soul.

When all the night of woe is past, and welcome morning dawns at length,
I will praise you, loving God, my refuge and my strength,
then I will praise you, my refuge and my strength.

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

The musical score is written for a unison voice part. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a treble and bass staff joined by a brace. The melody is in the treble staff, starting on a G4 note. The lyrics 'Praise God from whom all bless-ings flow; Praise God, all crea-tures here be - low;' are written below the first staff. The second system also has a treble and bass staff. The melody continues in the treble staff, ending with a double bar line. The lyrics 'Praise God for all that love has done; Cre - a - tor, Christ, and Spir - it One. A - men.' are written below the first staff.

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

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

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION (*UNISON*)** Dick Lauterbach

We pledge to steward these gifts with humility, remembering that all we have comes from you. May our giving be a covenant act: not just a transaction, but a mutual promise to care for one another, to lift up the forgotten, and to walk together in your ways. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS Dick Lauterbach

***HYMN** *New Century Hymnal #18*
Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer CWM RHONDDA

***BENEDICTION** Rev. Brian Damrow

POSTLUDE Cwm Rhondda Wilbur Held
AnnLaura Tapia, organ

Please remain seated for a brief congregational meeting.

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS:

Reader Leaders: Dick Lauterbach
Usher: Lawrence Bain
Coffee Hour Hosts: Gail Allinson and Angela Harrison

Audio/Video: John Hoo and David Watts
Laundry Hero: Kathy Donaldson

Prayer Requests

- For Juanita, family of Nancy Coleman, for strength and healing.
- For Camille (Dave Watt’s sister) and Brian Bell.
- For Wyatt, nephew of Jean O’Brien’s friend, that God will show him a path.
- For Kenneth McIntosh, brother of Joyce Hagen-McIntosh, who is in the hospital fighting an infection.
- For Mike Tobin, brother of Jill, who is going through treatment for kidney cancer.
- For the family of Reid Bannecker, brother-in-law of Julia and Kevin Cunningham, who is now at peace.

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

This Week at Church

Sunday	7/19	10:00 a.m.	Celebration of Worship	Sanctuary/ online
		11:00 a.m.	Coffee Hour	Founders Room
		7:00 p.m.	OA	Drawing Room
Monday	7/20	12:00 p.m.	Weekly Staff Meeting	Church Office
		6:30 p.m.	AA	Drawing Room
Tuesday	7/21	5:00 p.m.	Meditative Prayer Ministry	Chapel
Wednesday	7/22	7:00 p.m.	Church Council Meeting	Drawing Room
Thursday	7/23	6:00 p.m.	Parenting Teens Seminar	Founders Room
Friday	7/24	9:00 a.m.	OA	Drawing Room
		3:30 p.m.	Continuing Adult Education through Study	Zoom
Saturday	7/25	9:00 a.m.	Saturday Meals Program	Dining Room
Sunday	7/26	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

Saturday Meals Program: It takes a whole community to make the Saturday Meals Program a success. All year long, we have volunteers from around the western suburbs: scout troops, confirmation classes, clubs, church groups, and families join us to serve the La Grange community. If you, your family, or an organization you work with would like to volunteer with us — serving food, cooking, washing dishes, and talking with our guests — please speak to Amanda Ries or use the SMP volunteer link on our website's Ministries page.



School Supply Drive June 28 – August 2

Ministry of Missions is collecting school supplies to support students in the greater La Grange area* along with families served by the Migrant Ministry.

We are requesting a wide range of supplies, including:

- BACKPACKS
- MEAD SPIRAL NOTEBOOKS
- CRAYOLA CRAYONS
- CRAYOLA MARKERS (BROAD AND FINE LINE)
- CRAYOLA COLORED PENCILS
- PRE-SHARPENED PENCILS
- ELMER'S WASHABLE GLUE STICKS
- PAPERMATE ERASERS
- KIDS' SCISSORS
- POST-IT NOTES (3in x 3in)



Please bring donations to the back of the sanctuary and place in the containers provided.

*Collection and distribution coordinated by the LaGrange Public Library in partnership with local organizations.

Wedding Photos: Were you married at FCCLG? Maybe you attended someone else's wedding? We are looking for photos of couples during their nuptials to help promote our space in our social media and on our website. Couples at the altar or reception photos (if they take place in the building) are great! If you have photos (and have permission to share), please email them to Digital Outreach at murphgart@gmail.com. Thank you!

Willowbrook Farms in Cassopolis, MI: Have you always wanted fresh meats, honey, eggs directly from the farm? Your opportunity has arrived! Check out the website for Willowbrook Farm, <https://willowbrookmi.com>, because LaShinda John will be placing an order on Monday, July 27 with delivery taking place Saturday, August 1. Phone or text LaShinda: (773) 368-5531

Council Meeting Minutes: Church Council Meeting Minutes can be found in a binder in the Founders Room. Currently the binder has minutes from 2025 up to the current meeting. If you are interested in other minutes, please feel free to request them from the church office.

Ministerium Letter Update: As you may remember, Rev. Damrow and other clergy of the ministerium wrote a letter to be sent to our local, state, and federal representatives and leadership. The ministerium has made it available for individuals to sign via the QR code. You may review the letter and if you so choose, fill out the form to add your signature. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the office or Rev. Damrow.



Meditative Prayer Ministry: At FCCLG, we meet in the Beatitudes Chapel (the 6th Avenue Entrance will be open) from 5–7 pm on most Tuesdays to quiet our minds and listen for God's presence within. Come whenever you are able and stay for as long as you like. All are welcome.

Sponsored by the Law Office of Patrick Dankwa John

PARENTING TEENS

Without losing your mind!

Does your teen feel almost unrecognizable at times? Is it becoming harder to stay connected?



You are not alone.



The teen years can be both rewarding and challenging. As adolescents navigate increasing independence, social pressures, and rapid change, parents often wonder how to stay connected. Join us for an interactive presentation that explores teen development and offers practical, actionable strategies to help you strengthen connection while supporting their emotional wellbeing and independence.

Pizza and refreshments will be served!

Topics Include:



Communication

Build trust and open conversations with your teen



Digital Use & Social Media

Navigate technology use, set healthy boundaries, and stay informed



School Pressure

Understand academic stress and how to support your teen



Mental Health

Recognize signs, start conversations, and get support



Therapist, Megan John LCPC, CRC



Attorney, Patrick Dankwa John

Date: July 23, 2026

Time: 6:30pm - 7:30pm

Location: First Congregational Church of La Grange
100 6th Avenue, La Grange, IL

- Founders' Room - enter through Black doors on Cossit Avenue

RSVP by phone/text: 773-368-5531, pdjnotices@gmail.com, or QR code

FCCLG Leadership in 2026

Council:

Moderator of Council	Kent Llewellyn	moderator@fcclg.org
Past Moderator	Tom Lowry	
Vice Moderator	Patrick John	
Clerk	Sherri 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	Sherri 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 Sandra Kappmeyer Dick Lauterbach	Mary Anne Daniels Lisa Aulerich-Marciniak Diane Kasnick	Jill Tobin	Susan Lynch Jim Marciniak and many more!
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

Wheat and Weeds Together

July 19, 2026

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Wheat and weeds growing together! Yikes! This is a disaster! What are we to do?

So would have been the reaction of farmers when discovering weeds swaying in the wind alongside their cash crop of wheat.

Jesus knew the two together was not a good thing. He also knew that this was a perfect illustration to pose a more pressing question: How to deal with the good and evil mingling in the world?

And so, our Savior and Friend tells the parable about the wheat and weeds, pointing out that there's no way to prevent the "weeds" in life from coming into our fields. But be of good cheer. In God's time, the weeds will be separated and burned. Of course, Jesus is speaking of the time of judgement.

As it was with the actual weeds in the field, we must wait and let them grow, for if they are ripped out too early, precious wheat stalks might be taken as well. How many innocents have been hurt by our own exuberant weeding?

Jesus' parable makes better sense when we turn to the earlier use of the word "tares" rather the contemporary use of "weeds." Tares are referring to darnel which is a poisonous weed that looks just like wheat. This agricultural insight gave me pause, and the more I thought on it, the more I kept coming back to how quick we are to judge others before discerning their true motives or seeing deeply into their hearts. It seems increasingly that we label others as evil, wicked, no good, etc. Yet could it be that those we are labeling too quickly really are the wheat in the field?

I'm not saying that there isn't evil mingling with good in our world. Evil does a good job mimicking good. We need to be able to call it out when identified. But in a world so raw with distrust, we also need to stop before we speak and think before we label.

We also need to be aware of the wheat and tares in our own spiritual fields. St. Catherine of Siena, for example, heard this parable as one pointing to the presence of virtue and vice in her own heart.

There is a field of wheat and weeds in all our lives. And while we try our best to nurture the good and weed out the bad, it is not always easy to discern which is which. But God knows and God will step in and sort it out. Not sure how I wanted that to sound — hopeful or ominous? I guess it all depends how you, my dear reader, heard it.

All-knowing God, You are aware of the good grain we are growing as well as the weeds of division and contempt that are thriving. We want only our best selves to flourish, so be merciful to us when You sort out our own fields. May Your grace be abundant as it is amazing. 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)

