



ORDINARY 32C

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

148 STF – Come, let us with our Lord arise OR

183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

46 STF – Everlasting God, the years go by OR

333 STF – Majesty, worship his majesty

Readings: Haggai 1:15b-2:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17; Luke 20:27-38

Hymn:

348 STF – He is Lord, he is Lord OR

364 STF – O for a thousand tongues to sing

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

732 STF – Day of judgement! Day of wonder! OR

738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

295 STF – Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord OR

566 STF – Take my life, and let it be

Blessing

The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

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Call to worship

Praise be to you, O Lord

Praise to you for this day, and this time to gather,

Praise be to you for these people, coming together to worship you,

Praise be to you for the readings, the reflections, the music, the prayers we will share in this time together.

Praise be to you, and may we know your Spirit in our midst, we pray,

Amen.¹

Hymn:

148 STF – Come, let us with our Lord arise OR

183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way

Opening Prayers

Heavenly Parent, we come together to worship you.

Help us to prepare to hear your word and feel your Spirit moving amongst us.

May you move within our hands, that we may clap in rejoicing and open our palms to receive you.

May our lips sing your praises, and our tongues tell of your mighty acts and the splendour of your majesty.

May you open our hearts to receive your love. As each heart beats, we thank you that in you we are made alive not only in body but in spirit.

May you bring us to our knees in humble adoration. Father, let us kneel in your merciful presence, as you cleanse us and make us anew once again as we worship.

This day and every day, let every creature praise you.

In Jesus' almighty name,

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Let's hear a few verses from 2 Thessalonians 2, which make up one of our readings for today – we will hear the rest of it later on in our service.

"But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as first fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Phoebe Parkin

Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.”

What do you do when you win an award? Or you do something you're really proud of? Do you want to tell others or keep it to yourself? Do you pin it to your wall, or the fridge? Who praises you and encourages you?

In this verse, we are called to share the good news of Jesus, we are told to encourage our hearts and strengthen ourselves. But we are promised that God loves us and gives us eternal encouragement and good hope. This gives us reassurance that sharing the good news doesn't have to be a scary thing, it doesn't have to be something we do alone, we do it through God's strength within us, with his encouragement and with the good hope that this is what God wants from us.

God recognises that this isn't always easy, we are reminded to stand firm, hold fast to teachings, all of this helps us keep God at the centre and not making our preaching or telling of the Good news be all about ourselves.

If you ever have to talk about God and you don't know the correct words, perhaps you could think about praying about it first, asking God to give you the words needed to describe him, but also the words needed for the other person to hear you.

Amen.³

Hymn:

46 STF – Everlasting God, the years go by OR

333 STF – Majesty, worship his majesty

Readings: Haggai 1:15b-2:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17; Luke 20:27-38

Hymn:

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364 STF – O for a thousand tongues to sing

Reflections on the readings

This Sunday the Revised Common Lectionary has encouraged us to read from the prophecy of Haggai, from the book of Psalms (145, a passage which can be found in StF 836), from Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians and from the gospel of Luke.

³ All Age Talk written by Pippa Lupton

I suspect that in many churches today's preacher will grapple with the gospel, exploring how Jesus responded to a 'trick' question from "Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection."

However, I wonder whether there are other possibilities for the focus of our thoughts and prayers today? Some other resources are centred upon the Epistle. Whereas, our United Methodist friends (across the Atlantic) have chosen to focus their 'preaching resources' upon the reading from Haggai. Let's join them.

Reflections on Haggai 1.5b-2.9

When did you last hear a sermon on the Book of Haggai? Have you even heard a sermon based upon the works of any of the so-called minor prophets recently? Think back: have most of the sermons you can recall (if you can recall them!) tended to centre upon the gospels? Have a few focused upon the Pauline epistles? Then, in Advent, have the prophecies of Isaiah received attention? Perchance other prophets have received little consideration. So, let's redress the balance and allow Haggai to speak to us today.

At first glance at the passage we've heard read, we wouldn't necessarily start by assuming a correlation between our relationship to a place of worship and the relationship of Haggai's contemporaries to the Temple. So, if that's not our instinctive response to the message, what is there in the Haggai passage that might speak to us and through us today?

Is it helpful to begin by asking, "Who was Haggai?"

Haggai: the man and his time.

Actually, we know very little about the person named Haggai. We know of him only through his book. Fixing a date for his prophetic career is somewhat easier, not least because he seems to want us to grasp when precisely it was that he prophesied: we read,

'In the second year of King Darius, 21 in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai...'

that phrase not only gives us a date in history, it tells us that the people of Judah were under Persian rule, a conquered, defeated people, living in a small province at the western outskirts of the vast Persian Empire.

Do you remember that, despite the fall of the northern Kingdom of Israel, Judah had remained an independent nation with defined borders and its own king? The magnificent temple, built in the reign of King Solomon, still served as a spiritual centre for the worship of their God, Yahweh. The people prospered and Judah had a stable, agriculturally based, economy. In 587 BCE disaster struck, Judah was conquered and her leading citizens were either killed or taken off into exile in Babylon.

Roughly fifty years passed before some of the exiles were allowed to return to Jerusalem. It was not a triumphant return. Jerusalem lay in ruins. The relationship between the people returning from exile in Babylon and those who had remained in Judah, working the land, was often contentious and divisive: disputes arose over land ownership as people tried to eke out a living.

The year is 520 BCE and the situation has worsened: a terrible drought has devastated the crops and limited the supply of food. Hunger threatens and tensions grow.

This is the context into which Haggai speaks.

What's the message?

If you google, "What's the main message of Haggai?" The answer given is that 'Haggai encourages those who have just returned from exile to remain faithful, obedient, and

hopeful for God's promise of a new Jerusalem. Haggai challenges returned exiles to remain faithful and rebuild the temple.' God's presence will be in it.

In times of trouble, it's not unusual for a prophet-preacher to call upon people to repent, i.e. to turn back to God. They should set aside their squabbles and concentrate on God.

All that remains of the once magnificent temple, a burned-out shell of a building, stands as evidence of their neglect of God. It's not just about the restoration of the building. He's proposing a building project as a shared commitment, an opportunity for the reunification of the people. Overcoming internal differences through shared leadership, the collaboration between civic and religious leadership and the inclusion of the people in religious decisions: by rebuilding the Temple they will reorient their lives towards God and honour the divine.

Allow me to quote from Steed Davidson's commentary on Haggai:

"The people honour God through the temple precisely because they have experienced God's promises in history in events like the exodus and the restoration to the land. Undoubtedly, benefits will be derived from a restored temple and Haggai appears to admit this. However, the motivation for the restoration of the temple remains God's honour. Not satisfied with an incomplete project or half-hearted measures, Haggai pushes the community to offer its best to God." (workingpreacher.com)

So, Haggai calls on the people to "take courage" and says "do not fear." Haggai reminds them of the security of the promises of God, as seen in the exodus.

Why is Haggai so important? After thousands of years, the book of Haggai remains largely unique among the books of Old Testament prophets for one key reason: the people of Judah listened! Haggai's message, "rebuild the temple," was passionate, simple, and straightforward (Haggai 1:8)

So, what is Haggai saying to us?

It would be dangerous to just take a biblical prophecy and apply it ourselves, out of context. However, certain of its words and themes may resonate with us.

Perhaps we feel that the message applies more appropriately to those who live in war-torn lands, whose places of worship have been desecrated and destroyed? When peace is restored, should they not show their gratitude to God by rebuilding their churches and temples?

Our context is different. We're more likely to be concerned about places of worship becoming superfluous to requirement, draining our energies and our meagre financial resources. We have churches that we deem to have fulfilled their purpose: they're redundant. I doubt that many of us are about to embark upon extravagant building projects. However, can you recall a Church project (it might have involved changes to physical structures or even the support of a particular cause) where the community was united in purpose? Haggai was calling upon his people to act together.

Post-Covid, following the sale of buildings and the amalgamation of worshipping communities: are we in need of prophetic encouragement to reorient our lives towards God in our thoughts, our prayers and our actions? How can we work together for the good of the wider community and for the glory of God?

Amen.⁴

⁴ Reflection written by Wendy Kilworth-Mason

Hymn:

732 STF – Day of judgement! Day of wonder! OR

738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth

Prayers of intercession

Bidding: Lord, hear our prayer

Response: **Lord, hear us**

Lord, hear our prayer

Lord, hear us

God of the past, the present and the future

Hear our prayers for the world, the Church and our communities.

Sometimes, Lord, as we catch up with the news

we are overwhelmed by what we hear of war, famine and pestilence.

We pray for peace, that people may live in safety and security,

That refugees may return and be able to rebuild infrastructure: homes and temples,
that livelihoods may be restored.

For adequate rains and warming sun, that crops may flourish
and all be fed.

We ask that medical research succeed in making possible cures widely available and
affordable for the diseases that ravage the poor and threaten even the rich.

Lord, hear our prayer

Lord, hear us

God of yesterday, today and all the days that are to come

We pray for the Church, for its leaders and all its members

That they may work together to make the gospel known,

That it, the Church may reach out, demonstrating and embodying your love.

We pray for greater accord between the denominations

Without loss of the rich diversity of worshipping traditions.

We pray for the congregations of which we are a part

For the strength of the relationships we forge with neighbouring congregations

For our joint witness to the love of God for all people

Lord, hear our prayer

Lord, hear us

God of history, of the now, and of all that is to be

We pray for our communities.

For our friends and families

For colleagues with whom we work

For those whom we meet at the social club, the gym, the shops,
on public transport or at the health centre...

Wherever we encounter others,

Help us to build bridges, to offer the hand of friendship,
the listening ear and the open heart.

We hold before you those whose particular needs we know,

Some are awaiting medical assessment or treatment

Some will receive difficult diagnoses
Others will anticipate the restoration of good health.

Lord, hear our prayer

Lord, hear us

Lord, we commend them all to you:
be with all who suffer in body, mind or spirit.

Accompany those who sit and wait
Those who worry, for their own or loved ones well-being
Those who mourn...
And, Lord, enable us to embody your compassion

Lord, hear our prayer

Lord, hear us

Hear us indeed.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Generous God,
You have given us so much,
And so often we take it all for granted.
In this moment of offering, we give you thanks, and we offer a small token back to you and
your kingdom.
See these gifts are well-used, here in this circuit and beyond,
In Jesus' name

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

295 STF – Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord OR

566 STF – Take my life, and let it be

Blessing

May you go with the courage to join in with God's prophetic, transformative work, here in
this community, in your home, in your life, and throughout the world.
May you go, knowing that the Spirit of God goes with you.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Wendy Kilworth-Mason

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker