

Sermon November 9, 2025

candle-lighting liturgy

Whenever you hear:

Don't let the light go out

Please respond:

**As it has shone for so many years, may it shine through our love
and our tears**

We remember the founders and builders.

People who had a dream for a church in this place.

People who helped it to grow.

People who created space for worship, for study, for faith to be nurtured.

We remember those who lit the light of faith.

And as we light their candle we pledge:

Don't let the light go out

**As it has shone for so many years, may it shine through our love
and our tears**

We remember the outreach.

We remember how Jesus called us to be like lights set high on a lamp-stand for all to see.

We remember how Jesus called us to serve the least of his brothers and sisters.

And so we remember all the ways the people of this place have lived those out.

Providing food and clothing, pushing for needed resources in the wider community.

Supporting the community in which we live work and have our ministry to the best of our ability

And we light a candle, setting it high so all can see and saying:

Don't let the light go out

**As it has shone for so many years, may it shine through our love
and our tears**

We remember the workers .

The teachers and volunteers. The people committed to building a better world.

The places people have grown their understanding of faith and the world, places people have found a way to express their faith.

As these experiences have helped the light shine brighter, we light a candle and promise:

Don't let the light go out

As it has shone for so many years, may it shine through our love and our tears

We think of the present.

Those of us who are here now.

We give thanks for the gifts shared by those who have prepared the way for us.

We pledge ourselves to make good use of what they have passed down.

We light a candle and commit ourselves to it saying:

Don't let the light go out

As it has shone for so many years, may it shine through our love and our tears

We remember our calling, the light of hope for the future.

We hold in hearts those who will gather in this place in the years to come.

We light it as our promise that we will pass on the light of God.

We light it to show our trust in the promise that life continues, that faith continues, that there is indeed a future to await with joy and expectation.

As we light this candle we call out:

Don't let the light go out

As it has shone for so many years, may it shine through our love and our tears

John 15:12-17

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

We are Called to Build

What are the biggest challenges facing churches today?

Ask people to share

The prophet Haggai knew what it was like to look back and think the glory days are behind you. He is speaking to a people who are frightened and don't know what to do. After decades in Exile, separated from home, faith and family, they look around at the rubble that has been left behind. They don't know where to begin. Go through the prophet calls on the Israelites to build. Their temple was destroyed when they were exiled. Some had been able to return to Jerusalem 18 years before with the intention of rebuilding the temple, the place where God dwelled. It was where they worshiped and gathered as a community of faith.

They had prepared the foundation of the temple their very first year back from exile, and then they did not touch it for 17 years. They were too busy reclaiming their lives. They wanted to build their own homes plant fields, protect their families... they didn't have extra time to work on the house of the Lord.

I imagine the task was overwhelming too. It represented how much they lost... how far they had fallen from the promises of God.

But today God calls them to shift their priorities. Haggai calls them out: "You live in nice, comfortable homes. You spend your time on things that reward you -- eating and drinking, buying nice clothes and blowing your money on frivolous things. What about the house of the Lord? It's time to refocus your time, resources and energy on building for God instead of yourselves.

The Lord calls you to build."

And they began to build. But it didn't take long before rumblings start. The older ones compared to the temple to the one that was gone. "We can never make it as good as it was. Why should we even bother. This is a waste of time." Others thought, God left us in Exile, Why are we bothering to build a temple for the One who deserted us."

God understood how hard this would be. The Lord said, "Take courage!... We have work to do!"

But that's not all. God reaffirms the ancient promises: "For I am with you." I am the same God that marched your ancestors out of Egypt. I was with your people then, and I will be with you now and forevermore to come. My spirit abides among you; do not fear. You are called to build, and I will be with you through it all."

Today, the still-speaking God calls us to build, too!

We are not called to build a building, like our ancient forbearers were. We are called to build in a new way. God calls us to look at what we prioritize. Even though these words were written almost 3.000 years ago, they are exactly what we need to hear today. We are called to look beyond our own basic needs and desires. It's hard because we are bombarded with advertisements telling us what we just can't live without. People or organizations telling us what activities we must sign up to do. The secular world models that we should turn away from God and turn toward our own interests. Take the political election as an example. Politicians seem to care only for their own houses -- whether red or blue -- at the expense of the nation.

God wants something more from us... to expand our view of the world to include all people as worthy, vital and loved.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

We are called to embody love in a new and radical way. It's not easy because this is not the world we live in today. Too many voices tear others down instead of building up. Too many of our siblings focus on self-desires and self-preservation. It's a trap that any of us can fall into.

God scolds the people... not for taking care of themselves... for building homes and planting gardens and growing families... but for not doing anything with what they have been given except satisfying themselves.

They do not embody the love they have already been given

Rob Bell, a pastor and author, once talked about our eucharistic calling. He said the sacrifice of Jesus symbolized by the bread and wine are God's good gift to us. When we receive this gift, we are to go into this world and share this gift. We go out as the Body of Christ.

How are we going to be broken and poured out? What is our eucharistic calling? To go out into the world... into the broken places... and you build the Beloved Community.

The call is great but we don't do it alone. We all have a part to play. So, what is God calling you to build?

Reflect??

In Haggai's time, the rebuilding of the temple was a visible sign of the Israelites' determination to put God first in their lives. In Jesus time, we are told that we are called to embody this love in every aspect of our lives. The building doesn't always come easy, but it is always worth it, and the Lord of Hosts is always there.

Friends, let us go out and build!

Journey into Community

Materials: Bucket of sand, Tealights, Pencils, Candle, Pledge Card



Why in the world would I want to be part of a church,— what difference does it make in the lives of others? I really am taking a risk to be among others with whom I have little, if any, history! Living in community within God's household can get messy. A church is a way of living deeply and fully with people here and now, in the place we find ourselves – a collection of storied, fractured folks.

What 3 words speak of my story?

What do I offer to others in this
community?

Who is God's presence for me?

Light a candle to symbolize your light
in this community.