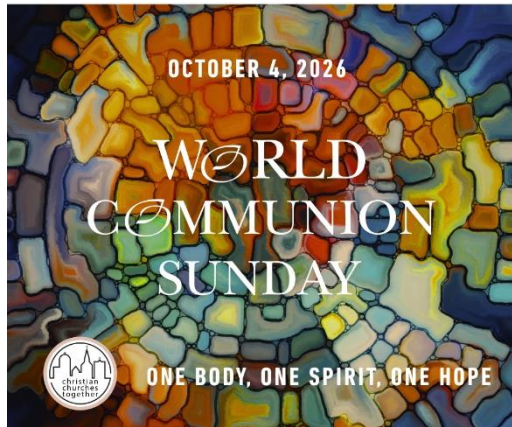




It's only natural on this World Communion Sunday to consider the various spots on this earth where we find not just beauty of the natural surroundings, but where we find soul-catching beauty and hope and joy and love and compassion amidst a backdrop of an entire world that appears to be overrun with anything but. Now, one of the most visited places around the globe remains London, England, which may not quite hold its empire-reaching power as centuries' past, but still brings in more than its fair share of international visitors, believed to be over 20 million each year. More often than not the tourists are

clamoring to see Big Ben and Buckingham Palace and Westminster Abbey. But perhaps a different soul-catching beauty can be found off some of the not so heavily trafficked paths in the United Kingdom's capital.

Now, back in 2011, when London was about to host the summer Olympic games, a local artist started a mosaic project to beautify some of the local neighborhood walls. However, the overwhelming majority of the soul-catching beauty would be done by those struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder, or dealing with addiction to alcohol or other drugs. The community project was intended to last only 6 months, just in time before so much of the world would be traveling to or watching on television, but the engagement was so tremendously therapeutic to the participants, providing them with a sense of empowerment and newfound purpose, that 15 years later, the Hackney Mosaic Project is still in full operation unleashing works of art in some of the most overlooked parts of London.

One of the artists, named Billy, who was dealing with PTSD and drug use, said, that the mosaic project, *profoundly changed my life...doing something which contributes positively to my local community. This was a huge boost to my extremely low self-esteem and gave a structure to my days which I sorely needed. The non-judgmental acceptance and encouragement which...the group offered helped me feel like a valid human being for the first time in many years. I continue to attend and to reap numerous benefits from my involvement. This project brings people together, to work and create together for the common good in magical and unique ways. I am very proud to be a part of it.*

And so, for this celebration day in the wider church: the church in the thick of a world that is often portrayed as too far gone, too overcome with dismal hopelessness, oftentimes leaving such people like Billy behind; and I wonder if his words could add another breath-taking layer of soul-catching beauty when envisioning what is meant to be the centerpiece of the celebration in the Communion table. A table that, in its own holy way, is meant to boost those who wonder if they deserve a seat at it at all. It is meant to be the encapsulation of God's authentic grace with a non-judgmental acceptance that even the church is not always the best at truly extending. It is meant to be a most pivotal proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: in not only offering hospitality to any child of God to partake in simple but soul-catching bread and wine, but to encourage the recipient to believe as if the Holy Spirit is primed and ready to magnify their gifts and talents that will shape entire communities for the better; to make the recipient believe as if the holy magic of God's love and hope and mercy can be revealed through them, no matter what the rest of the world may say.

Long ago, the Psalmist we heard this morning, marveled over the heavens declaring the glory of God. Today, the church insists that a simple table that has welcomed children of God who have hit absolute rock bottom, and those who seem to have it altogether well enough, and everyone else in between; that at this table, and those around the world, have their own soul-catching declaration to be made of the very glory of God, a glory that will not only welcome, but empower, and will make the greatest works of art come to life: through broken, but beautiful pieces of our human story, brought together to reveal our own breath-taking chapters of God's grace for the whole world to enjoy. So, on this World Communion Sunday, we most certainly give thanks to God for the endless supply of the love brought to life in Jesus Christ our Lord, now and forevermore. Amen!

For more information about the Hackney Mosaic Project, please visit:

<https://www.hackney-mosaic.co.uk/>