



The Psalmist tells God, "One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your power." Now, usually the standard operating procedure is that the older generations tell the younger ones how the world works, what to expect out of this life, including the inner-workings of God and faith, passing down the wisdom from all the generations before, as we do our joint-best in attempting to keep God's world running as smoothly as we possibly can. However, every once in a while, the younger ones have more than a little something for the

supposedly know-it-all adults to learn from as well. And one way our wider church of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America provides such a role-reversal for the younger generation to teach the older ones about the world and the inner-workings of God and faith is through a program called Young Adults in Global Mission.

Many years ago, the ELCA started this opportunity for young adults, ages 21-29, to take on a transformative, year-long journey in international service. Through these several months with Young Adults in Global Mission (also known as YAGM, for short), they are empowered to become the hands and feet of Jesus in the wider world, providing critical support to ministries and projects in communities of need. It, also, encourages them to go on a journey of deeper self-reflection, providing space to consider their sense of identity, God's work in the world, and their place within it all. The areas of service include health and development, congregational ministry, human rights, education, homelessness, addiction recovery and more. And the countries where they may go can range from Argentina to Senegal, from Israel to Madagascar.

And so, one of the teachings from this amazing group of the younger generation comes from Ali Eastham, who served in Hungary. Earlier this year, she wrote the following:

*Last week, I went with my language...group to an art exhibit for a famous Hungarian painter named Árpád Szabados. During the tour of the exhibition, our tour guide read us a poem that was originally written in Hungarian, but she translated it to English for us ...*

*One of the lines of the poem has been in my head since she read it last Tuesday. It said, "Everything whole is now broken."*

*I've been thinking a lot this year about the concept of being "whole." I've thought that I was "whole" many times in my life. Every time something good would happen - like a graduation, a new relationship, a new job - I would think that it would finally make me feel whole. The world has built up this expectation that everyone must be whole all the time. Over the last few weeks, I've been thinking about this. I've realized that sometimes, even when you are whole, brokenness can lead to growth.*

*This YAGM year has broken me in so many ways...I know this sounds negative, but trust me, the cracks are where the light gets through. Before I came here, I felt like I had my whole life figured out. I was happy in my friendships and relationships, I had a cute dog and a cute house, I knew what job I wanted when I came home, I was firm in all of my beliefs - everything felt whole.*

*It even felt like this for a few months after I moved to Hungary. It wasn't until [then] that I really started to notice the cracks. They weren't very big, probably not even noticeable by others unless they knew me very well, but I could feel them. Everything that I thought I knew was and is still being tested. The brokenness is allowing me to grow and thrive and change in ways that I wasn't even sure were possible. It's let me expand past the shell of my body and brain and break out into other spaces. It's let me learn to appreciate and cherish and question the whole galaxy, not just one star.*

*Sometimes, you have to be broken in order to make something beautiful. Think about stained glass that we so love in our churches. Have you ever seen a piece that is just one continuous piece of glass? No. They are made of fragments from other broken pieces of glass, but come together to make something breathtaking. That's how I took this line from this poem.*

*"Everything whole is now broken." In order to be whole and to be the most beautiful version of yourself, you must first be broken. As one of my favorite songs says, "It's gonna take a little rain, to let the grass beneath us grow, it's gonna take a little rain, 'fore the flowers start to show." Beauty comes out of the most horrible, broken places. I hope you can join me on this journey of self-discovery and rebuilding into a beautiful stained-glass window designed by God.*

Ironically enough, Ali wrote this only a few weeks before all the Young Adults in Global Mission throughout the world would be sent home, when COVID-19 changed their part of the world, too. Another piece of brokenness that still ended up making something quite beautiful, as this most wonderful portion of the younger generation returned to their homes not just to pass along their newfound wisdom, their teachings to older generations in their families, churches and communities; but it's that they developed such strong life-transcending bonds with their host families and new friends at places thousands of miles away, that they insisted on remaining in touch.

Because, even when the rest of us may see brokenness in places like Hungary or the West Bank or Rwanda, this younger generation is going to reveal to us those very places and people who God proclaims as absolutely beautiful. Yet another way that the church, even through the work of youth, remains committed to the Gospel that all generations are blessed with the most beautiful brokenness of the cross to make the entire world whole then, now and forevermore. And for that Greatest News of all, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!

*For more information regarding the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission, please visit:*  
<https://elca.org/Our-Work/Global-Mission/Young-Adults-in-Global-Mission>

*To view Ali Eastham's full article and blog, please visit:*  
<https://hungaryhappenings.home.blog/2020/03/03/everything-whole-is-now-broken/>