

1 Corinthians 12: 14-27

John 20: 17:20-24



Let us take a moment to contemplate the image before us — a tree.

Not an ordinary tree, but one crafted from the **intertwined arms and hands of people**. The trunk, the branches — they are human.

Reaching, supporting, holding one another.

And the leaves — they are bursting with difference. Some are smooth, others jagged; some are swirling like wind, others shaped like puzzle pieces or drops of light. Together they create a vibrant canopy — diverse, alive, and beautiful.

This is a visual echo of the Word of God in **1 Corinthians 12**.

Paul writes:

“Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.” (v.14)

Here Paul is speaking of the Church — of us. He's reminding us that we are not all alike, and we were never meant to be. The Church, like the tree in this image, is **not uniform**. It is **diverse by design** — and that design is God's.

“But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.” (v.18)

God chose. God arranged. This diversity isn't a compromise or a mistake — it's divine intention. And that includes neurodiversity: the different ways our minds work, process, feel, and imagine.

In our world — and sadly sometimes in our churches — difference can be seen as disorder, and uniqueness as inconvenience. But Paul tells us clearly:

“The members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.” (v.22)

Indispensable.

Not optional. Not burdens. Not tolerated.

Essential.

If we hear nothing else today, hear this: Those among us who experience the world differently — who may have ADHD, autism, dyslexia, Tourette's, or traits not labelled but still real — are **indispensable to the Body of Christ.**

We do not become whole by flattening difference.

We become whole by **honouring** it.

And so we return to our tree.

Its arms reach outwards, not drawing in defensively but opening wide.

The hands are linked — not in uniformity, but in mutual support.

It's a vision of **interdependence**, not independence — of how church is supposed to be.

It reflects Paul's longing in verse 25:

“That there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.”

Care for one another means we do more than welcome people in — we adapt for them. We ask not “Why can't they engage like us?” but “How can we engage like them?” We change our seating, our sound levels, our expectations, our liturgies — because each member matters.

Jesus, in **John 17**, prays:

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me... that they may all be one.” (v.20–21)

This is not unity in sameness. It is unity in love — unity in shared belonging.

Jesus prays this knowing full well the variety of personalities among his disciples: Peter, impulsive and headstrong; Thomas, questioning and cautious; John, contemplative; Mary of Bethany, intuitive and emotionally fluent; Martha, practical and task-driven.

He doesn't pray for them to become the same — he prays for them to become **one** in him.

And then he says something extraordinary:

“The glory that you have given me I have given them... so that they may be one.” (v.22)

Glory — not shame. Not a burden. Glory.

The glory of Christ is given to us so that we might reflect the beauty of diversity held together in love. So that we — like this tree — may be both **many** and **one**.

This is what it means to be a **Christ-formed community:**

- A community rooted in grace.
- A community that allows every branch to grow in its own shape.
- A community that treats difference not as deficit, but as divine design.

And this vision — this tree — is not only a picture of the Church.

It's also a **promise.**

A promise that we are all held.

That we are all necessary.

That when one part is honoured, the whole rejoices.

So let us ask:

- Are our churches safe and honouring places for neurodivergent people?

- Do our worship spaces reflect the diversity of minds God has created?
- Do we preach belonging in word and in action?
- And do we believe — truly — that **every leaf on the tree is needed for its flourishing?**

May we become more and more like this tree — deeply rooted in Christ, reaching out in compassion, sheltering all who need rest, and flourishing in the Spirit's wind.

Amen.