

A WWII chaplain collected glass shards from destroyed European churches. They've been transformed into art on display in Salt Lake City.

Exhibition sponsors hope the pieces teach onlookers the consequences of divisiveness.

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Walking through places of worship destroyed in World War II, U.S. Army Chaplain Frederick A. McDonald saw glass everywhere, the “deeply smoked” fragments of shattered stained-glass windows.

“The shards represented something deep that you want to remember about this,” [he later said](#). “It’s so often a little thing that can bring back a flood of memories.”

As he collected the shards in 1944 and 1945, he mailed them [back home to Seattle, but he didn’t know what else to do](#) with them. They sat in a closet for decades until one night, over dinner, he mentioned them to a group of friends, said Brian Farr, with Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable and Utah District of Rotary International’s Peace Committe

The conversation led McDonald to connect with artist Armelle Le Roux, Farr said. They worked with other stained-glass artists to create 25 pieces of work featuring the shards, each telling the story of the churches, synagogues and cathedrals where McDonald found them.

The pieces are now on display at the Walker Center, 175 S. Main St., from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. The “Remembered Light” exhibition, sponsored by the Salt Lake

Interfaith Roundtable and Utah District of Rotary International's Peace Committee, will continue until Nov. 17.

The organizers hope those who see it learn a lesson about the dangers of polarization.

The [exhibition, on loan from the Interfaith Center at the Presidio in San Francisco](#), is a metaphor for what division breeds — and for what happens when people set aside differences and try to build something out of the broken pieces, said organizer Indra Neelameggham, also with Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable. Though McDonald died in 2002 before the project was finished, he said he wanted the art “to serve as a memorial to the places they were found and offer hope for lasting peace,” according to a news release from its opening in San Francisco.

Neelameggham said the works are proof that rebuilding after tragedy is possible. The first time she saw the pieces, she said, she was overcome with a feeling of solace.

Since the exhibit opened Oct. 17, she said she's seen many people come in with coffee for just a quick peek at the art, only to see them linger and reflect on the pieces.

In the wake of the [recent mass shooting at a synagogue in Pittsburgh](#), Neelameggham said, she feels the art's message is enhanced.

“[It's] all the more reason to get more to come and visit something like this, so that we never step into that destructive phase anymore,” she said. “That's the hope.”

Farr said he hopes visitors leave with an understanding of what the exhibition says are the three ways to respond to polarization — and that they choose the most productive one.

The first option is to do nothing and stagnate, an exhibit placard explains. Second, people can escalate the division. Or third, people can, instead, focus on issues that unite them and build a foundation from there.

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