Radical Hospitality in Smaller Parishes
What to do when everybody “knows” everybody
November 19, 2009

Radical Christian Hospitality must take account these potential factors of smaller and/or rural parishes:

1. **Everybody “knows” everybody** – people may leave a parish for a certain reason; people are known in community and sometimes stereotyped or “pigeon-holed” into certain role within the community.

2. **Survival mode** – If everyone is “downsizing,” then small parishes face being merged or closed. Even if the parish exists now, how can you be sure it will not be closed in 5 years?

3. **Healing old wounds** – Everyone has a long memory for their hurts that need healing, but this is particularly acute in smaller communities and smaller/rural parishes where a smaller number of people interact with each other in a multitude of ways.

4. **We’ve always done it that way** – when two people out of 100 are resistant to change, it doesn’t impact the community nearly as much as when two people out of six are resistant. In small communities, resistance is a much bigger issue in part because of the smaller numbers!

5. **The program model does not work** – Larger parishes can rely on having a large number of different parish programs and ministries aimed at a variety of people, interests, ages, etc. This model does not work in smaller parishes where there are fewer resources and fewer people to offer anything that does happen within the parish.

Are there other factors that impact hospitality in smaller/rural parishes?

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Given all of these factors, what does radical Christian hospitality look like in a smaller/rural parish in Northeast Wisconsin?