Reflection for October 9, 2023



Progressive Christians like to talk about “radical welcome” which is modeled on the inclusivity of Jesus in his ministry. We do say every week, “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.”

But walking that talk can be a challenge. Many years ago, I had an activist from a Brazilian base community come stay with me for a three month residency. I went out one day and something about her seemed…familiar. “I have a shirt a lot like that,” I said. “Oh,” she laughed, “It’s yours! I saw it in your closet and thought it would be fun to wear.”

I reasoned that I have an awful lot of shirts, and why was I so uptight about sharing? But it felt strange to me that she had been going through my closet.

Later, when I had caught a cold, this woman eagerly brewed me a special Brazilian remedy for colds—it was made up of garlic, vinegar, sugar, and warm water. Seeing that she was trying to take care of me, I gulped the pungent liquid down.

I now see hospitality not as something a host offers to a guest, but a reciprocal relationship. And hospitality can take patience and compromise. As it grows, hospitality branches outward, creating community. For example, my nephews have recently traveled in Mexico, meeting hospitable people along the way. One such host then came up to California for a stay. Their friendship is deepening and pulling in family members as well.

So we are blessed to offer our sanctuary next Sunday to share a worship service with The Good Table and learn about their audacious and beautiful project. The Good Table seems to me to be a whole new way of thinking about what church, community, and hospitality can be, and I can’t wait for all of us to hear more about what they are doing. (And we will be taking an offering in support of Good Table.)

Please join us for a service of radical hospitality!

In faith,

Elizabeth